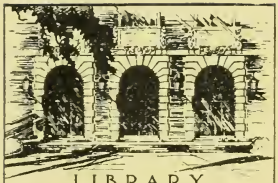

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MATILDA MONTFORT;

A

ROMANTIC NOVEL.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

PETER PEREGRINE, Esq.

VOL. II.

..... Lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold. SHAKESPEAR.

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MATILDA MONTFORT.

CHAPTER I.

Here hills and vales, the woodland and the
plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again.
.....
.....
Here in full light the russet plains extend:
There, wrapt in clouds, the bluish hills ascend.

POPE.

THE accident, and consequent illness of the Countess Villeroy, had been the cause of retarding the nuptials of the Chevalier Melun and Elinor; she had now so far got the better of her bruises,

as to be able again to visit among her acquaintance, and take her usual morning airings. The day was fixed for the union of the happy pair, and Matilda had the Countess's consent to attend her friend on the occasion; as well as to accompany her on an excursion, they intended to make, immediately after the ceremony, to a distant estate, belonging to the Chevalier, where it was their purpose to spend some time.

At length, the long wished-for day arrived; Melun, his heart beating high with transport, rose with the lark, and, at the appointed hour, led his lovely bride to the sacred altar, where they were tied in hymen's silken bands, in the presence of the Countess Villeroy, Madame Lunelle, and the Chevalier's friend, Chatillon. They then returned

to Madame Lunelle's, and, early the next morning, the bride and bridegroom, with Matilda and Chatillon, took leave of the Countess and Madame, and set out on their journey.

The Chevalier's estate lay in Bigorre, at the foot of the Pyrenees, to which mountains it extended on the south, whilst the north side was washed by the river Adour; which, flowing with grandeur by, took a western course, till it emptied itself into the ever-ruffled Bay of Biscay. They travelled by easy journeys each day, taking time to admire the beauties of the variegated country—the verdant mead, the glassy surface of the flowing lake, and the rude mountains, whose climbing tops were capt with clouds. They also stopped to view the royal canal, which had been

projected, and was then carrying on by Louis the Fourteenth, with the intention of opening a communication, between the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic ocean. They viewed with admiration, impediments overcome, that, to common minds, seemed insurmountable. Here, they saw it carried it over hills of stupendous height; there, over a valley of vast descent; and even ugh the torpid bowels of a moun- of adamantine rock.

Upon entering Gascony, and approaching the Pyrenees, Matilda was struck with their rude grandeur. When she viewed their lofty heads, embraced by everlasting snows; and their majestic sides, here, covered with forest foliage, the trees waving their proud tops to the blast of the stormy north; there,

huge over-hanging rocks, ready to break from their hold, and roll with awful force, down the rugged descent, overwhelming all beneath; interspersed with grassy lawns, and purple heath, on which were many thoughtless shepherds, watching their woolly charge, she exclaimed, " How beautiful are the " variegated works of nature!"

At length, they arrived safe in Bigorre, and drove to the Chevalier's *chateau.* It was a large, handsome building, situated in a pleasant, and fruitful part of the province; the grounds and plantations were extensive, and were as much indebted to nature, as to art, for the beauty they exhibited. The surrounding shrubberies and plantations, were laid out with taste, and the shrubs selected with great care, both as to the

foliage, and the sweet perfumes they shed around them. They joined, at the back of the *chateau*, to the rude walks, made by the hand of nature, on the towering side of the lofty Pyrenees, up whose steep ascent, Matilda would frequently walk, to enjoy, in the heat of the day, the cooling, shady bowers, formed by the meeting branches of the spreading chestnut, and the stately plane.

CHATILLON often attended her in her rural excursions, but, though his every action shewed the state of his heart, he never, in all the opportunities they afforded, again mentioned his love. A sigh would break from his bosom, when he has been witness to the acts of charity she performed, among the inhabitants of the numerous cottages, scattered about

the mountain's side; or, when he has gazed at her with rapture, and listened with delight, as she accompanied the music of her lute, with her harmonious voice; but, remembering the conversation that took place between them, the night he found her so much alarmed in the avenue at Villeroy Castle, he forbore to run the risk of offending her, by again mentioning the subject.

For some time after he had made that declaration, she had behaved to him with a considerable degree of restraint; but now, when she found that, though he had so many more opportunities than before, he did not renew the subject of his passion, it wore off, and she conducted herself towards him, with the same ease and freedom she

had ever done. Indeed, she had for him a sincere friendship, his many excellent qualities she highly valued, and, had she not ever seen Dumain, that friendship, in all probability, might have ripened into love. She admired the symmetry of his person; his manly features, and his excellent heart, of which latter she had frequent opportunities of knowing more than he imagined; as, in her own acts of charity and benevolence, she often found that he had been before her, in his relief of indigence and distress; and, what added much to the friendship she felt for him, was the great resemblance she fancied there was between Dumain and him, both in person and manners: when he was playing her favourite air on the German flute, she almost imagined it was Dumain himself.

She was then, in idea, transported, for the moment, to her dear cottage in the vale, in which she had spent so many happy, so many innocent days; she again longed to be there, and again enjoy the instructive conversation of her dear father, which she had there experienced with filial delight.

NOTWITHSTANDING these ideas would at times creep into her mind, she enjoyed the variety of amusements, and variety of scenes, she was now a partaker and spectator of. The party did not confine themselves to the rural bowers, and towering woods of the Pyrenean mountains, but visited the towns in the province, to mix with the gay throng of fashion, in the close-squeezed mall; or to join the cheerful crowd, in

the splendid ball-room, tripping lightly down the airy dance, with many a mazy turn.

Sometimes, they took a pleasurable jaunt to the sea coast; when, stretching their eyes to the westward, over the Atlantic ocean, they admired with wonder and surprise, the barks of every nation, proudly sailing on the majestic waves, freighted with richest merchandize; now, moving like stately castles, across the main, with a gently-undulating port; now, tossed about by the rude and boisterous billows, sometimes rising with an awful grandeur, surpassing thought, upon a mountain of the fluid element; then, sinking beneath its crispy top, into a depth of dire descent, lost to the sight, for a time, as if to rise

no more: then, again discerned, slowly ascending another liquid mountain, higher than the last, and, again sinking into the deep abyss; whilst the intrepid mariner enjoyed his can of grog, or soundly slept in his rope-slung hammock, thoughtless of danger, or of peril, either when slowly rising to the mountain's height, or when rapidly sinking to the direful valley's awful depth; ——to the beholder a tremendous sight.

After mixing with the gay and festive crowd, they returned to the *chateau*, to rusticate in the rural enjoyments of a country life, rendered more sweet, by comparison with the bustling merriment of the towns they had just visited. Sometimes, they would climb

the mountain's bowery side, and seat themselves in a grove of myrtles, overtopped by the lofty pine, and branching cedar, and pass the evening in music's sweetest harmony.

CHAPTER II.

Delightful mansion! blest retreat!
Where all is silent, all is sweet!
Here contemplation prunes her wings,
The raptur'd muse more tuneful sings.

HUGHES.

ONE evening Matilda had strayed beyond her usual distance, up the mountain's side, and, being fatigued, sat down on a moss-grown seat to rest herself.—She had not been here long, before she heard the sound of a lute, accompanied

by one of the sweetest female voices she had ever heard, in a melancholy song, of mourning and of woe. She arose from her seat, and approached the spot, from whence the music issued. She beheld a female, apparently about forty years of age, in whose air and deportment, appeared dignity and majesty; and in whose features and complexion, shone beauty, not to be surpassed in one at her time of life, though strongly impressed with marks of grief.

She stood gazing for some time, before she was discovered by the stranger; and listened with ecstacy to the charming music of her voice and lute. When she had made an end of her song, Matilda apologized, for having unintentionally broken in upon her retirement.—Having, through the fineness of the

evening, been induced, she said, to wander farther up the mountain, than she had ever been before, she was detained by the melody of the music she had heard; and had not power to leave the spot, till it was finished.

"THE song you heard," said the stranger, "was a melancholy one; but, "it is one that suits the gloomy state "of my mind. Melancholy, and I "have long been intimate, and I do not "expect it will leave me in this world."

THEN, looking at Matilda, a deep sigh broke from her heaving bosom, and pearly drops chased each other, in quick succession, down her grief-worn cheek.

SHE added, "If you have far to re-

" turn home, you may be fatigued be-
" fore you reach it; if you will, there-
" fore, favour my poor cottage with
" your presence, and rest awhile, I
" shall think myself honoured; it is
" hard by."

MATILDA signified her assent, when she was led by her conductress, round a jetting rock, into a grove of cedars, where stood a neat small cot, with white-washed walls without, and within were neatness and cleanliness exemplified. They entered a small parlour, one side of which, was occupied by a book-case, filled with a small, but well chosen collection of the best authors; a music table was at one end, and over it she hung her lute. Behind the parlour was a small kitchen, which, with two bed chambers above, were all the

apartments the cottage afforded; and was large enough for the family that inhabited it, which consisted only of the mistress, and a servant maid. After Matilda had rested herself some time, and had taken a glass of home made wine, pressed from the grapes that grew upon the cottage walls, she took her leave, having first, at the earnest solicitation of her hostess, promised to renew her visit.

WHENEVER she walked up the mountain, she always directed her steps this way. She felt more than a common attachment for her new acquaintance, with whom she was, in a short time, upon terms of affectionate friendship.

SHE often wondered how it happened,

that a woman like her, who appeared to have a thorough knowledge of the world, and who possessed an understanding, far above the generality of her sex, should chuse to shut herself out from society, in which she would make a shining figure; all that she had learned, however, was, that her friend had once lived in the great world, but that melancholy circumstances had arisen, which drove her from it, to seek an asylum in that unfrequented part.

MATILDA felt more real pleasure in her visits to Madame Evreux, than she did in all the gaiety of the *chateau*, or in their frequent excursions to the neighbouring towns; in the latter, she experienced pleasure that ended with the amusement that gave it birth; but the conversation of the former, sunk

deep into her mind, being fraught with precepts, that, while they amused, instructed.

They sometimes walked on the mountain's side, and then descended into the plain beneath, admiring the variegated country around. From the former, they would view the busy vintage-men, gathering their autumnal store, the vineyard's richest gift; and watch the ruddy sickle-men, cut down the golden produce of the grateful earth; see them bind it into sheaves, and, to complete their harvest, carry to their well-stored barns their heavy loads. Then, upon the plain, they would with hearts that pleasure moved, behold at harvest home, the blithsome swains, and their cheerful partners crowned with roseat health, enjoying the harm-

less rustic *fête*, in all the plenitude of innocence and content.

" Ah! my dear," said Madame Evreux, " who, that had once enjoyed " the uninterrupted peace of mind, that " these happy mortals experience, " would wish to change their blissful " life, for the bustle and the ceremony " of courts and palaces? Believe me, " in the latter, there often exists more " disquietude in the breast, in one hour, " than these thoughtless beings feel in " the whole extent of their lives. See, " with what carelessness they throw " their supple limbs about! See, what " smiles of pleasure and of joy, beam " in their Countenances, the offspring " of their innocent hearts! Health " and Contentment, twin sisters! are " their companions ever. Blessed at-

" tributes! Possessed of ye, all sta-
" tions are happy, the great can view
" the storms by ambition raised, whilst
" the poor man feels himself rich in
" ease and comfort, not wishing for
" more than the little he has, and en-
" joying that little, without the ills of
" sickness and of pain.

" HEALTH, sacred health! by the wise
" and good ever courted, ever valued; by
" the profligate, and the gay, too often
" neglected, too often despised! Thou
" art the greatest good of life; with
" thee poverty can repose upon a bed of
" straw, and rise refreshed by balmy
" sleep; without thee, riches and gran-
" deur lie tossing on a bed of state,
" sleep ever flying their weary eye-
" lids, though courted on a couch of

" down. Chastity and Temperance in
" thy train thou keep'st, whilst riot and
" debauchery thou shunnest ever.—
" Health and Content! ye are to be
" sought, but in scenes like these!"

" I NEVER view these rural plea-
" sures, but I feel a lightness of heart,
" and placidity of temper," said Ma-
tilda, " that are always accompanied
" with great delight. Often at our
" sweet cottage in the vale Le Pui,
" have I wondered what higher enjoy-
" ment the great could experience,
" than the poor, but contented inhabi-
" tants around me, when I have seen
" them engaged in their innocent sports,
" full of happiness, full of health.—
" Here, a party on the verdant velvet
" turf, dancing to the sound of the pipe

" of reed; and here, another, full of
" joy, and full of life, playing at their
" favourite game of hoodman-blind.
" Can the pursuits in palaces and courts,
" give more heart-felt satisfaction, I
" said to myself, than these happy crea-
" tures enjoy?"

" Void of ambition," said Madame Evreux, " these happy mortals have few
" cares, and few anxieties; and those
" few, being bounded by a narrow cir-
" cle, are soon brought to a conclusion:
" at the same time, their expectations
" being within reason, they are gene-
" rally brought to the conclusion they
" hoped for; whilst the great are form-
" ing endless schemes of ambitious pro-
" jects, the attainment of one, only lead-
" ing them on to the attempt at others,

" thus putting their restless minds ever
" in agitation."

MATILDA grew every day more attached to Madame Evreux; the more she saw of her, the more she found to admire in her. She felt a degree of respect and regard for her, with a reverential esteem, she had never before felt for any woman she had met with. She wished Madame lived near the cottage of the vale; or, for the enjoyment of her conversation, she would herself even, with pleasure, consent to leave that cottage, much as she prized it, if her father would come and reside in the vicinity of Madame Evreux. To be near her, she would willingly resign the placid scenery of the vale, for the rude woods, and rugged rocks, of the snow-capt Pyrenees.

Nor did Madame Evreux regard her with a less partial eye. When they have been together, she would gaze on her with silent rapture, whilst tears of delight could be discerned, falling from her eyes in copious streams, deep sighs, now and then, escaping from her heaving bosom, which would, at times, seem ready to burst its boundary.—Since she had first seen her, she felt an uneasiness whenever her visits were at an end, always eagerly looking forward to the next. Had she been her own daughter, and only child, she could not have felt a stronger attachment to her. Indeed, it was not possible for any one to be intimately acquainted with Matilda, without feeling the power of the sweetness of her disposition; which, with her beauty, elegance of

manners, and, " though last, not least," the bright accomplishments of her mind, were sure to rivet closely to her, the hearts of all.

CHAPTER III.

..... Nature
Falls to revolt, when gold becomes her object.

SHAKESPEAR.

As Matilda was one day at the cottage of Madame Evreux, near to the rock, round which the road lay into the grove, in which it was seated, she saw three men with naked swords, one of them defending himself against the other two. She screamed loudly, and ran towards

the cottage, where she found some vintage-men gathering grapes in the garden, who, as soon as they understood the cause of her alarm, hastened to the spot, and, arrived just in time to see one of the combatants fall beneath the swords of the other two, whose arms were uplifted, to put an end to the almost expiring life of their conquered foe. When they saw the men advancing, they fled down the mountain's side, and were quickly out of sight.

By this time, Madame Evreux and Matilda had reached the place, where the wounded man lay: he had lost a considerable quantity of blood, and had, in consequence, fainted; in which state, he was, by the vintage-men, carried into the cottage, where he was put to bed. A surgeon was sent for, who, after a

considerable lapse of time, arrived.—He examined his wounds, and found that none of them were likely to be of any serious moment, his present state arising, solely, from the loss of so great a quantity of blood, as he had sustained.

After lying at Madame Evreux's cottage about a week, his wounds were sufficiently healed, to allow him to depart. He made many offers of thanks, for the kind accommodation he had been furnished with by Madame, and expressed himself in terms of gratitude to Matilda, by whom it was, he said, that his life had been saved; for, if she had not raised the alarm, at the time she did, he must have fallen a sacrifice to the swords of his enemies.

MATILDA expressing a desire to know how he came into the dangerous situation in which she saw him; he said, he would give them a short history of his life, and of the circumstances that led to the rencontre, when by her interference, he was so fortunately delivered from the death, that hung over him.

"MY name," said he "is Filesac; "I was born at Embrun, in the pro- "vince of Dauphiny, and was educated "at the university of Valeur, being in- "tended by my father for the profes- "sion of the law. I studied there till "the period of his death, which, un- "fortunately for me, happened at the "time I was about nineteen. This "event left me master of my own will,

" and my own actions; and, no longer
" being under the wholesome restraint
" of an experienced father, I grew
" wearied with studying, and threw
" aside my books, to commence gen-
" tleman.

" Through the interest of my family,
" I obtained a commission in the army,
" and was sent with my regiment to
" Ireland, to assist King James the Se-
" cond, to recover his crown from the
" Prince of Orange, now William the
" Third of England; but, being defeated
" upon the banks of the river Boyne,
" we made good our retreat, and got
" safe back to France. I afterwards
" served several campaigns in Flanders;
" till at last, I received a dangerous
" wound which confined me many weeks

" to my bed, and incapacitated me from
" following my profession; the conse-
" quence of which was, that I was
" obliged to throw up my commis-
" sion.

" It was a long time, before I perfectly
" recovered; at length, however, I found
" myself sufficiently reinstated in my
" health to visit Paris. Here I entered
" into all the gaieties, and fashionable
" follies of the day; and, very soon
" squandered in rioting and debau-
" chery, nearly the whole of the for-
" tune my father had left me. I deter-
" mined to make a desperate effort, to
" recover what I had dissipated, by
" staking the whole of the little I had
" left at the gaming table, in hopes
" that fortune would be propitious to

" me. I made the stake and lost.—
" I was reduced to beggary. My
" friends, who had often shared my
" bounty in my prosperity, now fled
" from and forsook me. Destitute of
" money, destitute of friends, I knew
" not what step to take. At last I ac-
" cepted a situation, as waiter at the
" gaming house I used so much to
" frequent, attending upon those per-
" sons I had been accustomed to asso
" ciate with as equals.

" In this situation I remained for
" some time, a prey to melancholy, and
" disquietude; my pride being wounded
" by the haughty treatment, and impe-
" rious behaviour of those, with whom
" I had, no great length of time before,
" been upon terms of equality.

" In this state of mind, I one day left " the room, immediately after expe- " riencing an indignity from one of my " former associates, and I attempted " to put an end to my life with a pis- " tol. Owing to my hand, I fancy, " not being steady, the ball missed my " head, only grazing my ear. The re- " port of the pistol, drew to the apart- " ment I was in, several persons that " were at that time in the house; " amongst the rest the Chevalier Saint " Fleur."

Madame Evreux appeared unwell, she heaved a deep sigh, and turned pale; she rose from her seat, and went out of the parlour, much agitated.— Matilda followed her, and found her nearly fainting; however, the fresh air,

after sitting a little time upon a seat at the door, brought her to herself, and they returned to the parlour, when Filesac resumed his narrative.

" The Chevalier Saint Fleur, who had " known me whilst I was in the army, " took me aside; and, after hearing " from me an account of the uneasy " state of mind I laboured under, made " me an offer of living with him, in the " capacity of humble companion; that " is, a kind of superior domestic, whose " duty it is, to feed the luxuries, and " minister food to the vicious inclina- " tions of his employer.

" In this situation, I have been for " these five and twenty years past, and " still remain; and am likely to conti-

" nue in it, as long as he or I shall
" live.

" He sent me lately to the steward
" of some estates he has, in the pro-
" vince of Gascony, for a sum of mo-
" ney, that he has a pressing occasion for,
" with orders to call, after receiving it, in
" this neighbourhood, to make some in-
" quiries, in which he is particularly in-
" terested. The two men who attacked,
' and wounded me, are neighbours of
" his steward, and knew that I had re-
" ceived the money which was the
" chief object of my journey. They
" accompanied me, till I had made the
" necessary inquiry, that I had visited
" this neighbourhood for, and inticed
" me, under the cloak of shewing me
" grand and romantic prospects, up

" this side of the mountain, for the pur-
" pose of robbing me. Just as we got
" to the spot, where you saw us en-
" gaged, they told me with what in-
" tent they had accompanied me, and
" said that if I did not immediately
" give them the treasure, they would
" have both it and my life. I refused,
" and drew my sword; but, if you had
" not fortunately come up, at the time
" you did, and given the alarm, I must
" have fallen a sacrifice to my fide-
" lity."

Filesac having finished his narrative, after repeating his thanks to the one for her hospitable entertainment of him, and to the other for her interference, by the men she sent to his relief,

in the contest between the two robbers and him, he took his leave.

The illness, with which Madame Evreux had been attacked had not subsided, when Filesac left the cottage. She found herself very unwell, and not able to sit up. The next day she was worse, and kept her bed altogether, with every appearance of an approaching fever. Matilda sent to the *chateau*, and apologized for her absence, being determined to remain with her sick friend as long as she should continue ill, and want her assistance. She gave up the whole of her time, to her attendance on her; and, had the satisfaction to see the disorder take a favourable turn, on the third day; after which the fever

gradually left her. She remained, however, so enfeebled by it, that she could not quit her room, for some time, during which, Matilda never left the cottage.

CHAPTER IV.

This most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire.

SHAKESPEAR.

UPWARDS of a week had elapsed, since Matilda had been at the *chateau*, when Chatillon walked up the mountain's side, to the cottage of Madame Evreux, to inquire after her health, and that of her sick hostess. He found

them with a pair of globes before them.

" WHAT a vast idea of the unbound-
" ed and omnipotent attributes of the
" great Creator of all things, does a
" contemplation of the celestial bodies
" convey to us!" said Madame Evreux.
" Who can view the millions of noc-
" turnal stars—each a sun to other
" worlds—that present themselves to
" our eyes, when we turn them up to
" heaven's high dome on a clear and
" cloudless night, without feeling the
" insignificance of the poor worm our
" soul inhabits; and, without turning
" our thoughts, on the great Architect of
" the immense, immeasurable space be-
" fore us? Who can view the order
" in which the planets move upon
" their respective axes, in their orbits,

" round the sun, and view the sun
" himself, without being filled with
" adoration, and with awe? The works
" of the Creator are calculated to in-
" spire wonder, and that wonder can-
" not fail, in a rational mind, to pro-
" duce praise and reverence."

" I HAVE often," said Chatillon,
" sat hours at a time contemplating the
" heavenly bodies; and, fixing my eyes
" upon the planets, have been lost in
" admiration, when I reflected on
" the velocity of their motion. One
" would imagine, that of the innumera-
" rable luminous bodies, with which
" the lofty arch of heaven is studded, it
" would be likely that some one might
" come in contact with another, and
" the obstruction cause a shock, that
" would in an instant send them into

" annihilation, and take along with
" them other worlds into the same abyss
" of destruction; but not so, the all-
" wise, all-skilful Architect has dispos-
" ed his materials, multifarious as they
" are, in such perfection, and in such
" order, that not any one of the moving
" countless bodies we can discern, and
" of numberless others that are hid
" from our view, shall interfere with
" another, but all move in their des-
" tined track, along the vast aërial ex-
" panse."

" It is astonishing," said Matilda,
" to think of the absurd notions some
" of the ancients entertained, as to the
" form of the world; that is, I mean,
" of what we call heaven and earth;
" supposing the latter was a flat sur-
" face, supported by something under-

" neath, and that the canopy of the " former, was stretched over us, and " adorned with the sun, and all the " bright nocturnal luminaries, only for " our use!"

" TRUE," said Madame Evreux, " but, that system was so absurd, that " even the ancients themselves, had " various speculative opinions; many " differed from that hypothesis, yet " did not agree with each other; and " were all of them at variance with the " system afterwards established by Co- " pernicus, and lately plainly demon- " strated by that great and learned " English philosopher, the present Sir " Isaac Newton. But though they dif- " fered as to that, the early sages agreed " in their praise of the Almighty, for

" his wonderful creation of the celestial,
" as well as terrestrial world."

" We have abundant cause for ad-
" miration, and for praise," said Chatillon, " whether we contemplate the
" vast expanse o'er our heads, or view
" the earth around, with the animal and
" vegetable productions upon it.—
" Whether we turn our eyes to the
" azure sky, now, without a speck
" upon its extensive space, the glorious
" sun shining with brightness refulgent
" upon the lower world; then, variegat-
" ed with slowly undulating vapours
" of milky whiteness: or, when the
" celestial arch is covered with imper-
" vious murky purple clouds, loaded
" with the electric fluid, through which
" it darts its forked fire, followed by
" the awfully rumbling thunder, and

" emitting the liquid element that falls
" upon the thirsty earth, to lend its aid
" to vegetation's power; or, if we view
" by night the silvery brightness of the
" moon's pale light, borrowed from the
" sun's refulgence, reflecting his rays
" upon the darkened world. Then,
" the animal, and vegetable creation,
" how wonderful! and most of all,
" how wonderful is man! What a piece
" of mechanism! which alone, suffi-
" ciently shews the omnipotence of the
" Creator, without any further aid.—
" But the beneficence of the Almighty
" did not stop here, but for man's sus-
" tenance and use, created the feather-
" ed, and the finny tribes, with the fleecy
" sheep,—both food and raiment,—the
" horned cattle, and the beasts of bur-
" den. The vegetable creation too,
" calls for its share of praise, whether

" we view the herbage, crawling on " the earth, or the sturdy oak, whose " spreading branches tower towards " the sky. I admire greatly," continued he, " the lines of the immortal " English poet, in praise of the works " of the Creator.

" These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
" Almighty, thine this universal frame,
" Thus wond'rous fair; thyself how wond'rous then,
" Unspeakable; who sitt'st above these heavens
" To us invisible, or dimly seen
" In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
" Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine.
" Speak ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
" Angels; for ye behold him, and with songs
" And choral symphonies, day without night,
" Circle his throne rejoicing; ye in heaven,
" On earth, join all ye creatures to extol
" Him first, him last, him midst and without end."

In conversation of this kind, the tedious hours of Madame Evreux's indisposition were beguiled. She being now nearly recovered from the effects of it, Matilda took her leave of her, accompanying Chatillon to the *chateau;* having first, however, promised to walk up to the cottage the next day.

Chatillon was so much taken with the manners of Madame Evreux, and represented her in such glowing colours, that both the Chevalier and Elinor, had a great wish to be introduced to her, that they might give her an invitation to spend some time at the *chateau;* by which means, they would have an agreeable addition to their party, and, at the same time, secure the company of Matilda, whose society they

so much missed, when she was absent from them.

The next day, when she went to the cottage, she told Madame of the wish, that the Chevalier and Elinor had expressed, and a day was fixed for them to visit her. In the mean time, she made some little preparation for their reception, by having her hedges trimmed, and the outside of the cottage new white-washed; with the borders in her little garden fresh raked, and the lawn mowed close; which, altogether, gave an air of such neatness to the spot, that Melun and Elinor were quite delighted with it; but were delighted, still more with their hostess, whose person and manners, they thought more

interesting, than almost any body they had ever before seen.

They spent an agreeable day, sometimes in rambling o'er the torpid rocks, on the mountain's variegated side, to the embowered grove, or the grassy plain, where they stood to admire the country before them; now, fixing their eyes upon the numerous peopled villages below them, and upon the lofty spires of the larger towns at a distance, scattered o'er the vasty track; now, upon the angry ocean, whose foaming surges lashing the bold Biscayan shore, send upon the wings of the western breeze, the awfully murmuring sound; and, upon the freighted bark plowing the deep, till from a lofty tower of wood, it became as a speck upon the bosom of

the séa, and, at length, was lost in distant space.

In the evening they took their leave of Madame Evreux, but could not obtain a promise from her to visit them, at the *chateau*. She hoped, she said, she might be again honoured with their society at her humble cottage; but as to accepting the kind invitation of the Chevalier and his bride, she must beg to be excused, as she had made a resolution not to leave her lowly habitation, even for a day only.

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CHAPTER V.

I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
..... But yet, I cannot love him.

SHAKESPEAR.

MADAME Evreux and Matilda were so mutually attached to each other, that the latter did not let a day pass, without visiting the cottage. They had one evening walked some distance, and being fatigued, they rested themselves

in a grot, formed by the cavity of a rock, seated in a bower, and open only towards the setting sun. It was surrounded by myrtles in flower, and the sweet smelling eglantine; the spicy heliotrope bending to the ground, the fragrant rose in full blow, with the twining woodbine, and the spreading jessamine, lent their fragrant aid to scent the ambient air. A cooling breeze gently agitated the odorous shrubs, and bore upon its wings, the sweet perfume to the centre of the grot. They sat, watching the fiery orb set in majestic splendour; he sunk deep in the Atlantic ocean, and left only the faint reflection of his rays behind.

They rose and returned to the cottage, where Matilda took her leave for the night, and, attended by a servant of

the Chevalier's, descended the mountain's side. She had not gone far, when, as she was turning round a clump of laurels, at a little distance from the grot she had been sitting in, she saw a handsome young man approaching her.—When he came up, she immediately knew him to be the Count Saint Claude, with whom she had danced several times, at different balls she had been at, in that neighbourhood.

He told her that he had called at the Chevalier Melun's that morning, to have paid his respects to her, and was disappointed in not finding her at home; but added, that he was fully compensated by the unexpected happiness he then enjoyed. He begged permission to see her safe at the *chateau;* and, upon their arrival, he was invited by

Elinor to supper. As usual, after their repast, the party amused themselves with music, for which purpose they retired into a room appropriated solely to that use, in which were instruments of every kind, and music of the most celebrated composers of the Italian and other schools. The Count took a part on the violin; Elinor touched the harmonic chords of the harp; Chatillon breathed sweet notes from the hautboy; whilst Matilda accompanied her lute with her charming voice.

Saint Claude had before looked upon her with admiration, but now, that admiration was increased to rapture. He thought he had never beheld so much perfection.

He, from this time, became a fre-

quent visitor at the *chateau*, paying great attention to Matilda, shewing by every action, the power she had, unintentionally, obtained over his heart.

KNOWING that she generally paid a visit to Madame Evreux every day, he made a point of walking towards the cottage in the evening, in the hope of meeting her, and of having the happiness of conducting her home, and enjoying her loved society during their walk, without interruption.

SHE saw with pain the attention paid to her by Saint Claude. She was not blind to his merits, which were of a superior class, both mental and personal; but still, she could not, without uneasiness, receive his assiduities; as she could not but see, from what source they sprang.

EVEN if she had viewed him with an eye of partiality, she would have felt the impropriety of indulging in the idea, as the superior station of life in which he was placed, rendered it very improbable that an honourable issue could attend a connexion between them: but the fact was, she felt she had not a heart to bestow. She therefore impatiently wished, that he would give her an opportunity of putting an end to any hopes he might have formed; but she was disappointed, as he seemed studiously to avoid coming to an *eclaircissement*.

MEAN while, Saint Claude's breast was racked between love on one side, and parental duty, assisted by pride, on the other. He had learned, upon inquiry from Chevalier Melun, that Matilda was

the daughter of a man in an humble sphere of life, without family connections, or fortune; with only her personal beauty and mental accomplishments to recommend her, which, eminent as they were, he was aware were but poor qualifications in the eyes of the great world. But, even if he could bring his mind to conquer pride himself, he knew he should never be able to reconcile his father to such a connection.

Count Saint Claude was the eldest son of the Marquis de Pontoise, a man of unbounded pride and ambition, whose chief aim it was, to introduce his son to the notice of the King, in hopes that he would cut a conspicuous figure on the political stage, in that busy time; in order the better to accomplish which, he had nearly succeeded in his endea-

vours, to bring about a match between him and a near relative of Cardinal Mazarin, prime minister to Louis XIV. It was not at all probable, therefore, that he would quietly suffer his ambitious prospects to be blasted by him; or, that he could ever be brought to listen to his choice of a wife elsewhere; and, particularly, of one so much beneath the connexion he had set his mind upon.

Saint Claude was sensible of this, yet, still he could not bring himself to give Matilda up; and he continued to seek every opportunity of enjoying the rapturous delight he always experienced in her presence, which served to pierce more deep with the dart of love, his already deeply wounded heart.

The conflict in his bosom raged with great violence, for a considerable time. At last, love got the better, and he determined to risk all, for the attainment of the object of his affections; at whose feet he would, the first time he had the pleasure of a private interview, lay his titles and his honours, and all the vast possessions he was heir to.

It was not long before he put this resolution into effect. She had been spending a few days with Madame Evreux at her cottage; and, being always an early riser, particularly when she could enjoy the pure breeze of the country; one morning, the jocund lark raising his tuneful pipe on high, whilst the glorious majesty of day was proudly rising from his orient throne, decking the

hills and forest foliage with refulgent splendour, she walked out, and was unexpectedly met by Saint Claude. The tyrant love had driven him from his bed of down, to seek for quietude in the undisturbed contemplation of his passion, upon the spot, so often the retreat of the object of his adoration. Here he poured out the effusions of his soul to her, and made her an offer of his hand, and to share his fortune and his rank. But how great was his disappointment and surprise, when she in modest, but peremptory, at the same time, respectful terms, refused the profered honour! However, he was willing to flatter himself, that her present disposition towards him, might be the effect of diffidence, and that this determination against him was not insurmountable. He resolved, therefore, still to perse-

vere in his pursuit, hoping that a little time, with the most respectful assiduities on his part, would alter her sentiments in his favour.

In the mean time, the Marquis de Pontoise, by some means or other, became acquainted with Saint Claude's attachment to Matilda; but not that she had refused the offer of his hand. He took his son to task, who, far from denying his love, endeavoured to justify it, by drawing an eloquent, and highly finished picture of the bright accomplishments, and personal beauty of its object.

The Marquis, at first, coolly remonstrated with him, on the impropriety of a young man, born, as he was, to fortune and to rank, with every prospect of making a shining figure in the world,

throwing himself away on a person of mean descent, and no connections. Finding that his arguments made no impression on his son, his rage broke out with ungovernable fury, and he vowed vengeance on the seducing beggar, as he called her.

MATILDA daily visited Madame Evreux as usual, with whom she rambled o'er the mountain's variegated side, engaged in pleasing and instructive conversation. Sometimes, by a pearly streamlet, trickling down the craggy steep; now, o'er a flower-embroidered lawn, adorned with nature's richest tints; then, o'er the russet torpid rock whose joyless brow o'erhung the plain.

ONE evening, after reclining on a

turfy seat, under the far-spreading branches of an umbrageous oak, they entered a grove of oranges and of olives, which led into a bower of myrtles, that communicated with the little garden of the cottage, through which they passed; then, partaking of some fruits, delicious to the palate, they parted for the night, with an intention of enjoying each others valued discourse the next day.

As Matilda was returning to the *chateau*, and had just reached the mountain's base, the servant who always attended her, was joined by another man. After some private whispering conversation between them, she was seized by the stranger, and hurried into a carriage, that was waiting for her at a few paces distance. It was in vain she

screamed, in vain she struggled. One of them seated himself by her, while the other, mounting the box, drove off at full speed.

NIGHT now ruled with ebon sway, and they drove on without stopping. She inquired from her conductor for what reason she was thus brutally treated, but could not obtain any reply, the fellow observing a sullen silence; neither was she more fortunate in her inquiry as to the place he was conveying her to.

AFTER travelling all night with the greatest speed, day began to dawn, and they met some shepherds driving from the pens their woolly flock. She screamed aloud, in hopes to interest them in her favour, but to no purpose.

Afterwards, her conductor drew up the blinds of the carriage, and they travelled in as great darkness, though it was broad day, as they had been in, the whole of the preceding night.

The wheels now rattled over the pavement, which, with the frequent turnings she could perceive the carriage to make, convinced her that they had entered a large town. She determined, the moment that it should stop, to endeavour to make herself heard, by somebody who might be passing through the streets, at the time; and she was in hopes that it was not yet too late, to be delivered from the power of her rude assailant. She waited impatiently for the clattering of the wheels to cease, but they still went on, and she was fearful they did not mean to stop here, but

that their intention was to convey her to some sequestered place in the country, where she would have no chance of meeting with help. The wheels were no longer heard to sound on the pavement, which confirmed her in this idea.

They travelled the whole of that day, and night had again spread her sable cloak, when they drew up, and the carriage door was opened. It was so dark, she could not distinguish what sort of a place she was in. All that she could see, was a large building, at a door of which appeared a man with a lamp in his hand. She screamed for assistance, in hopes that there might be somebody near, who would be drawn to the spot by her cries of distress, from whom she could, and she hoped, not

ineffectually, claim that protection she was so much in need of. But her hopes were disappointed, no one came near her, and she was hurried through the door, which was shut upon her with a thundering clap, that resounded with a hollow echo through the building, and she heard the carriage drive off.

CHAPTER VI.

Remote, unfriended, melancholy.

GOLDSMITH,

MATILDA was shewn into a large apartment, by the man who had met her with a lamp at the door, in which was sitting by the fire an old woman, whom she afterwards found was his wife. Some refreshment was laid before her, of which she was invited to partake; but her mind being too much occupied

by the uncertainty of her fate for her to eat, she took little notice of their solicitations.

The old woman proposed to her to retire to rest; for which purpose, she led her up a spacious staircase into a large chamber, which appeared to have been formerly very splendidly furnished, but was now in a state fast approaching to utter decay.

The old woman trimmed a lamp in silence, and setting it on a table, left the room. Matilda had not spirits to make the inquiries she wished, yet dreaded, and she was obliged to remain ignorant of either the reason why she was brought there, or of the place itself.

She threw herself upon the bed; but sleep, much as she had occasion for it, refused to visit her weary eyelids.

As soon as the dawn of day peeped through her chamber windows, she rose from her restless pillow. She viewed the apartment with greater attention, than either the light of her lamp, or the depressed state of her spirits, would allow her to do the night before. The walls were hung with tapestry; which, in many places, was rent in slips, the tatters playing upon the wind, that made its way through the fissures in the walls. The ceiling was curiously carved, with a representation from the Odyssey of Homer, of Ulysses, at the Phœcian games, tearing from the ground a huge and ponderous rock, with energetic arm, and Herculean strength; and

hurling it, with gigantic force, through the whizzing air. Large mirrors filled up the piers, the gilding on the frames of which, was grown black with age. The bed was very large, but low; the hangings, now faded, had once been a deep yellow, and were made of the richest satin. The floor was black oak, with the doors of the same wood, adorned with gilt mouldings; the locks and handles were large, and made of brass, the hinges being of the same metal.

Upon looking out of the windows, nothing but a thick wood, impervious to the sight, presented itself to view; the sound of cawing rooks, and croaking ravens, which flew about the trees, being all the noise to be heard.

THE old woman made her appearance, and inquired if she would chuse to go down to breakfast, or have it in her own chamber. She chose the former, in hopes that she might learn from the man, or his wife, where she was, and why she was brought there. She was, however, disappointed, as both of them were silent to all her questions on that head.

AFTER they had breakfasted, she asked if she might have permission to walk in the wood, but was given to understand by the man, that she was not to be allowed to go outside the walls, but might go where she pleased within.—"And surely," added he, in a rough and surly tone of voice, "there's room "enough inside the castle for you!"

THE woman, seeing the tears trickling down her lovely cheek, checked her husband, and said, "Don't speak "so gruffly, Peter."

"GRUFFLY, or not gruffly, I tell her," said he, "that she must not go outside "the castle walls; and if you attempt "to deceive me, Jaquenetta, by letting "her go through the doors, but for a "yard, you shall answer for it."

MATILDA did not stop any longer with them, but retired to her chamber. As she was sitting, musing upon her strange and desolate situation, she started at seeing the arras move, as if lifted up by somebody on the other side. She watched it for some time, but the motion was not repeated; she then ven-

tured to approach the spot, and, gently pressing it, she found that it gave way to her hand, and a door opened into a light closet. She entered it, and saw on one side a large book-case, upon opening which, she found that it was full of books.

This was a discovery that gave her great satisfaction, as she found some alleviation of the sufferings of her imprisonment, in the solace that reading afforded her. She now spent all her time in her closet, nor ever went down stairs, or into any other part of the castle.

She had frequently thought of availing herself of the permission to walk over the building, which, it is probable, she would have done before now, if she had not found the store of books in the

closet adjoining her chamber, from which she derived all the amusement she was capable of receiving, in her present situation.

As she was one morning sitting in her closet reading, she perceived an unusual draught of air issue from the wall near her seat. Upon examining the part, she found a door which opened into another apartment, as large as that she slept in, and furnished much in the same style of ancient elegance, and was in the same state of decay. This apartment led to another, which communicated with a staircase, much wider and more spacious than that which led to her chamber, and seemed to be the principal one of the castle; and from which branched a corridor, that went round the centre of the building, with numerous cham-

bers, to which it led. At the four corners, were open galleries, leading to as many towers, which, by their means, communicated with the main building, but all of them in a state of the same ruinous decay as the other parts.

She now frequently walked round the upper part of the castle, and sometimes ascended to the tops of the towers, to enjoy the air; as for prospect, there was none, the building being surrounded by thick and high-growing trees on every side. She would sometimes sit here, to watch the sun sink behind the wood, in brightness and in splendour, and to hear the enchanting Philomela's evening song.

She was induced by the pale lustre

of the silvery moon one night, to remain later than usual on the top of one of the towers, when she heard the sound of a bell; which, though not loud, appeared at no very great distance from her. This revived a kind of hope, to which her heart had been long a stranger, and she resolved to endeavour to find some means of escape.

She returned to her chamber, and revolved in her mind a number of schemes that presented themselves, but all of which, upon mature deliberation, appeared fallacious. The doors were so well guarded, it was in vain to attempt egress that way, and the windows were so great a height from the ground, it was not possible to escape through them. She was, therefore, obliged to give up

the hopes she had lately entertained, of being able to leave the place of her confinement.

Upon looking into the many chambers that opened into the corridor, she found amongst them one much more pleasant than any she had seen in the castle. Opposite to the windows was a vista, cut through the wood, which, though it afforded no very extensive prospect, presented to the eye a limited view of rural beauty. At the bottom was a large pool of water, the extent of which was lost in the adjoining groves. Lofty chesnuts lined each side, whose spreading branches met at the top, while the oranges of lower growth, intermixed with citrons and pomegranates, flourished luxuriantly beneath, sending upon the pinions of the

gentle zephyrs, the aromatic perfumes, shedding their sweet odours in the room she was. At the edge of the pool was a straw-roofed cot, upon whose whited walls the jessamine mantled, intertwined with the climbing honeysuckle. Upon the borders grew in plenteous abundance the sweet-briar, the myrtle, and the blushing rose; the lawn being by nature's pencil painted with the richest flowers, of various scents and hues, conjointly lending their aid to fill the air with delicious fragrance, and to charm the eye with unequalled beauty,

This room now became her favourite resort; here she brought her book, and beguiled the slowly-creeping hours in alternately reading, and viewing the pleasing scene before her. She was one evening sitting at a small move-

able writing-table, after reading as long as the light of day would permit, admiring the grand luminary of the night, as she was slowly rising from behind the distant wood, tipping with silver the rude tree tops, when she was suddenly alarmed by a loud noise in the room. She started and turned round, but could not distinguish any person near her. In her fright she overturned the writing-table, the falling of which, disturbed a large owl, which fluttered about the room, and which had, at its first entrance in at the window, made the noise that had alarmed her.

The next day, when she came into this room, she found the overturning of the table had burst the lock of a drawer, which lay at some distance upon the floor, and round it were scattered

a number of papers. Curiosity led her to examine them, but, she did not find among them any that attracted her particular attention, till, as she was putting them into the drawer again, she saw upon one the name of Count Saint Claude, which convinced her, that he must be in some way or other connected with her present situation.

As she was passing from this room to her chamber, by the great staircase, she thought she heard a more than usual bustle; when, going down a few steps, she distinctly heard her name pronounced, and several times repeated. She listened attentively, but could not either distinguish the subject of the discourse, or recognise the voices, although she thought one of them was familiar to

her ear. She could, however, plainly ascertain that there were more besides those of Peter and Jaquenetta, and that it was by the strangers, her name was frequently mentioned. Silence now ensued, and it appeared that they had taken their departure, as she heard a carriage rattle over the pavement of the court-yard, the sound receding from her ear.

When she met Jaquenetta alone, she endeavoured to obtain some information, respecting what she had just been a witness to, but to no purpose, the old woman observing the closest reserve upon the subject, and was silent to all her inquiries.

Jaquenetta was a humane, good-

natured creature; and if she had not been under the controul and awe of her husband, would not only have willingly given Matilda the information she wanted, but would also have been more indulgent to her, as to the extent of the boundaries she was confined to. But Peter was inclined to treat his prisoner, even with more rigour than his orders would warrant; all his wife could do in her favour, was, to keep him from exceeding the strict letter of his directions; to abate of them, she had not influence over him, to induce him to do.

Matilda felt very unhappy in her present uncertain situation, and the late circumstance of her name being mentioned by the strange voices, with the si-

lence of Jaquenetta to her inquiries, only served to add to that unhappiness.

She again turned her thoughts towards attempting an escape. She had never examined the ground floor of the castle, having confined her researches to the rooms and galleries up stairs. She now, however, determined that she would endeavour to explore the lower part of the building, the first opportunity that she had, without being perceived by either Peter, or Jaquenetta, particularly the former, who she was fearful, though he had given her liberty to go over the whole of the castle, if she chose, would suspect the motive that led her into a part, in which it would not appear, that there was likely to be any thing that could repay her

curiosity. She had more difficulty to encounter in that respect than she had looked for; as, since the late affair of the strange voices, they had been much more watchful of her motions, than before.

CHAPTER VII.

Ye low-brow'd vaults, ye gloomy cells!
Ye caves where night-bred silence dwells!

OGILVIE.

As she was one morning sitting in the room, where she generally went to read, she observed Peter enter the cot by the pool, at the bottom of the avenue; and, at the same time, heard Jaquenetta in a part of the castle, at some distance from the place she was in. She thought this

a favourable opportunity of putting her long projected scheme in execution. She went down stairs, and made several attempts to open the doors, that led out of the great hall, but found them all fast locked; she tried them all, one after another, to no purpose.

She was near giving up her intention, and was just returning up stairs, when she discovered a crack in one of the panels of the wainscot; she went up to it, and putting her hand into it, found it easily gaveway, and she slid it back. It opened to a winding stone staircase.—Just as she was about to put her foot upon the first step, she heard a key turn in a lock, and the massy bolt spring back, which was followed by the creaking of a door upon its rusty hinges. She had no doubt this was Peter returned; she had

only just time to replace the panel in the state it was when she discovered it, and to get up stairs before he entered the hall.

It was some days before another opportunity presented itself; when it did, she did not waste her time, in examining the doors as she had before done, but went direct to the panel in the wainscot, slid it back, and entered. She had not got down many steps, before she found herself in perfect darkness. She returned up the stairs, and closing the panel after her, went to her chamber for her little lamp. She trimmed it, again slid back the panel, and after she had passed through, drew it again as it was before, and descended the steps.

When she reached the bottom, she found herself in a narrow vaulted way, along which she proceeded for a considerable distance; when, by the light of her lamp, she perceived she had got into a spacious cavern, out of which branched a number of narrow passages, made by nature or art out of the solid rock. She entered into one, which winding round, she found, after walking about an hour, that it had brought her to the same place, from whence she had set out. She then took another, which proved to be that she had first come along, as it brought her to the foot of the staircase she had descended from the great hall. She returned back, along the same passage, till she again got into the same large cavern.

She now entered one on the opposite side, which, appearing to be something wider than the others, she thought might lead, possibly, to some road out. She proceeded along it, for some time, when she was again bewildered by a number of narrow paths, not knowing which to take. She ventured upon one, however, which led her to another cavern, neither so lofty, or so large, as that she had just passed through. As she was crossing it, to enter an opening on the opposite side, she stumbled over something. On holding her lamp down to it, she perceived that it was the skeleton of a human body. In her horror and surprise, she dropped the lamp from her hand, and was in total darkness, the light being extinguished by the fall.

She now found herself in a most distressing situation, and what steps to take she knew not. If she should attempt to return back, it was next to an impossibility that she could find her way, through the numerous winding, and branching passages, that would present themselves; and, to go forward, might be attended with equal danger, as she might be precipitated into some unseen pit, or fall a sacrifice to the inhuman ferocity of some lawless marauder, who might have a hidden retreat, not far from where she was, to whose thirst for blood, in all probability, the person whose skeleton she had seen, had been a former victim.

She stood in doubt and hesitation what to do. At length, she resolved

upon attempting to go forward. She felt about with her hands; and having found one of the passages, entered into it. She walked slowly, the vault sounding with the echo of her footsteps.

The wind blew hollow, roaring with a terrible howl, which, with the dismal darkness of the place, and the lively apprehensions of what might befal her, struck dismay to her heart. Every blast of wind, that groaned horribly through the subterraneous way, added to her fear. Her spirits grew faint; she could hardly proceed; her limbs refused their office; her knees tottered; her brain turned round; she sunk senseless upon the earth.

When she came to herself again,

and opened her eyes, she found the vault faintly illuminated; and imperfectly beheld several strange figures standing over her. Her fright was renewed, and she relapsed into the same state, from which she had just before recovered.

When her recollection was again restored, she was surprised to find that she was upon a bed, in a room, surrounded by females, in the habits of nuns, and to learn that she was in the monastery of Saint Catherine.

The castle, to which she had been brought, and in which she had been kept a prisoner, belonged to the Marquis de Pontoise, by whose orders it was, that she had been conveyed there, where it was his intention she should

remain, till after Saint Claude's marriage with the relation of Cardinal Mazarin; as he was fearful his son's attachment to the object of his wishes, would break through parental authority, and, by marrying her, would ruin all the schemes he had laid for his advancement and future fame.

The monastery of Saint Catherine was distant about half a mile, and was surrounded by lofty trees, which, with its being seated on the opposite side of a hill, covered it from the view of the castle. It was founded by an ancestor of the Marquis's, at the time the castle was built, when there had been a communication between the two buildings cut under ground.

It was through this secret subterra-

neous way, that Matilda had gone from the great hall, along which she had nearly reached the convent; the vault where she had lost her lamp in her fright, being the cemetery belonging to it, and the place where she was found, a passage that led to the chapel, adjoining which it was; and along which the nuns were passing, to attend evening service, when they found her lying, in a senseless state, upon the ground; and who, upon her relapse, conveyed her into an apartment in the convent.

She lay very ill for some days; at length, through the attention of the sisterhood, and the administration of some proper medicines, she was perfectly reinstated in her health. She felt happy in the idea, that she should here find a safe asylum, until she could

inform her father and the Countess Villeroy of her situation. She acquainted the Lady Abbess with the particulars of the manner in which she had been so brutally seized, at the foot of the Pyrenees, and forcibly conveyed to the castle de Pontoise; being convinced, that it was only necessary to acquaint the Superior with her story to interest her in her favour, confident that unmerited distress would meet in her a protectress, who would grant her a sanctuary in her holy house.

She was soon undeceived in respect to the disposition of the Lady Abbess towards her. She found, that she was as close a prisoner there as she had been in the castle; and, when she re-

quested to have the means allowed her of sending a letter to her father, was absolutely refused; being given to understand, that no steps would be taken concerning her, until the Marquis's pleasure should be known.

This determination of the Lady Abbess, damped the hopes that Matilda had entertained, of a speedy termination to her distress; she was, however, reluctantly obliged to acquiesce. Her mind, notwithstanding, was considerably relieved, by much of her time being occupied in the religious duties of the monastery, as she constantly attended service at the stated times, when the pious lays of the nuns, offered up to Heaven in their shrill voices, accompanied by the solemn deep-toned organ,

quieted her perturbed breast, and, for the time, suspended her trouble and her distress.

She was one evening sent for into the parlour of the Superior, who received her with a haughty, supercilious air, and, as she opened the door, before she had well got in, said, "How dare you "pollute these holy walls, by entering "them with an untruth on your lips? "This letter, which I hold in my hand, "is from the Marquis de Pontoise, and "informs me of the arts you used to "ensnare his son, Count Saint Claude; "how you, a child of indigence and "of obscurity, dare to aspire to the "alliance of one of the first noblemen "in France."

Matilda endeavoured to exculpate

herself; but the Lady Abbess stopped her, calling the truth she uttered falsehoods, fabricated for the purpose of imposing upon her, in order to obtain her liberty, that she might again fly, to repeat her lures and her snares upon the heart of Saint Claude.

" But I shall take care," continued she, " that you go not from hence, till " you are safely delivered to the Mar- " quis de Pontoise, or to the Baron " Longuaville, to whose direction the " Marquis has given you, and whom I " expect here very shortly."

She then ordered Matilda to withdraw, who went, with a heart loaded with grief and sorrow, and eyes streaming with tears, into her apartment. To be placed in the power of Baron Lon-

guaville, was what she dreaded more than almost any other event that could happen. She had, from the first time she saw him, looked at him with fear, and she dreaded every thing from him. She threw herself into a chair, and gave vent to her sorrow in deep sighs, and a copious flood of tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

The wind is up: hark! how it howls! methinks,
Till now, I never heard a sound so dreary:

BLAIR.

THE vespers bell—the iron tongue beating against its sonorous sides—called Matilda to the hallowed chapel, where the sisters had already assembled to perform their usual evening devotion. She joined them in their prayers, and in their holy hymns; after which, she

sat wrapt in the melancholy contemplation of her wretched situation.

THE pious nuns had left off their sacred strains; the solemn organ had ceased to breathe its awful swelling notes; when, starting from the musing melancholy she had been indulging in, she rose to depart. Upon casting her eyes around, she found she was left alone, almost in darkness, a pale glimmering light at a distance, faintly illuminating the gloomy consecrated arches. She moved towards it; it receded from her, and quickly disappeared, the chapel door shutting at the same time, with a loud clap, that echoed through the vaulted aisles.

SHE was now in perfect darkness, and how to find her way out, she knew not.

She traversed many times, with anxious steps, the pavement round, and, at length, found a door which she imagined was that through which she had entered, but all her efforts were not sufficient to force it open. She tried at it till she was almost exhausted, and was obliged to give up the attempt.

She resolved to make a further search, in hopes of discovering some other way out. She once more went, with extended arms, round the chapel, and came to another door, that was open; she entered into a small room, which, by feeling about, she found was the sacristy. Despairing of finding a road out, she threw herself upon a bench, determining to wait there, till the time of assembling for the morning devotion.

THE wind blew in hollow blasts, through the arches' desolate void; the harsh notes of the night-birds, flitting about the reverend pile, struck discordant on the offended ear; which, with the impervious darkness of the night, added to the awful place she was in, caused in her mind sensations of the most gloomy nature. She lay prostrate on the wooden bench, revolving in her thoughts her wretched situation, and the dreadful improbability there was of being delivered from it, but by being thrown into a worse.

SHE was aroused, and her attention arrested by a female voice, singing an evening hymn, accompanying it with the sweet music of the lute. She rose from her bench, and crossing the chapel, in the direction in which the sound

came, she was led by it to a low and narrow door, which opened into a long straight passage, from the farther end of which, the music seemed to issue. She entered, and had not gone far, before she perceived a small faint light. She made up to it, and stood in silence, till the voice and music had ceased.

She saw through a small aperture in the wall, crossed with strong iron bars, a narrow and confined cell: in the centre stood a coarse oak table, with a small lamp, from which the feeble rays of light she had seen were emitted. By it sat a beautiful young female, with a lute in her hand, which shewed that she was the sweet musician. There was something extremely interesting in her appearance, even at first

sight, which was heightened by a deep melancholy that sat upon her brow, and told Matilda that she was a fellow sufferer in distress. She put down her lute, a deep sigh bursting from her heaving bosom, and the tears trickling down her lovely cheek; she laid her head upon her hands, which rested upon the table, and sobbed aloud. Matilda, her own troubles recurring with double force, at sight of the distress before her, in unison sobbed again.

The fair stranger, in surprise, lifted up her beautiful black eyes, swimming in the crystal fluid, and coming up to the barred window, inquired who was there.

Matilda informed her, that after

the exercise of the evening devotion, she had given way to the contemplation of the distress she was in; and, being absorbed in thought, she had inadvertently suffered herself to be left in the chapel; that she had made many endeavours, but had not been able to find the road out again; and concluded, by requesting that she would direct her, or allow her to sit by her lamp, in her apartment, till morning.

"ALAS!" said the other, "it is not "in my power to do either. I am a "perfect stranger to the place, though "I have been an inhabitant these two "years. The first instant I entered "this monastery, I was in secret con-"veyed here, where I have been locked "up ever since, and have not before,

" seen the face of a human being, ex-
" cept that of the Lady Abbess, who
" visits me herself at this grated win-
" dow every morning; not any other
" person knowing that I am here."

MATILDA continued at the window of the fair prisoner's cell, till the matins' bell again called the pious inhabitants of Saint Catherine's to the holy chapel; when, joining them, it was not known that she had been absent from her apartment during the night.

SHE now, as often as she could secretly pass through the chapel, visited the grated window of the cell, and spent as much time in conversation with its unhappy inhabitant, as she dared to do, without hazarding a detection;

which would at once abridge her few comforts, by taking away the pleasure she enjoyed, in the society of the interesting fair captive, and would take away the only alleviation of the misery and distress of the latter.

MATILDA expressing an earnest desire to hear a narrative of the facts that led to her present unhappy situation, she, without hesitation, began as follows:

" I AM the only child of a nobleman, " of a very ancient family, which has " for centuries resided in the South of " France——"

SHE was interrupted, by an unusual bustle at a distance, which caused Ma-

tilda to be apprehensive that she was missed from her apartment, and that the Lady Abbess would send to seek her here. She therefore took an abrupt departure from the interesting stranger, and was hastening out of the passage. As she approached the entrance, the hurry and commotion seemed to increase. She heard the sound of many feet, and saw the sisters passing, in the utmost confusion, across the farther end of the chapel. They quickly returned again, and entered the sacristy, where they staid a considerable time, which prevented her leaving the dark passage she was in, for fear her motive for being there should be suspected. The bustle and confused noise still continued, a small tinkling bell keeping up an incessant ringing. The Lady

Abbess entered from a door on the opposite side, through which it was that the nuns had passed, when Matilda first saw them. The bell ceased ringing, and the noise was succeeded by a still silence, the Superior, followed by the sisters, leaving the chapel.

MATILDA now got, unobserved, to her chamber, when mixing with the crowding nuns, she inquired the cause of the hurry and confusion to which she was witness. She was informed, that a man had been seen to enter the chapel, with an intention, it was supposed, to rob the sacristy; but that he had been discovered just as he opened the door, before he had time to put his design into execution; and the alarm be-

ing given, he made his escape, through the chapel, down the garden. It was supposed he had come by the river, and landed from a boat; as that, they said, was the only possible way by which any one could get into or out of the monastery, without passing through the great gate at the front, which was always well and sufficiently guarded.

THESE suppositions were confirmed by the Lady Abbess, and those who attended her into the garden, having seen the sacrilegious villain enter into a boat that was waiting for him, when he escaped across the river.

MATILDA listened most attentively to the account, of the probability of the way by which the man gained access,

and to the confirmation of the supposition, that he had escaped the same way. A faint gleam of hope came across her mind, and she determined, at no very distant period, to endeavour to explore the passage to the garden. This, she thought, she should not meet much difficulty in, as she had, when she was in the chapel, unobserved, returning from the cell of the unhappy prisoner, taken particular notice of the road the crowding nuns went out, during the bustle, which she had no doubt led to the garden direct.

The next morning she contrived to be left behind in the chapel, after the conclusion of the solemn service. As soon as the door was shut, and she was left alone, she repaired to the grated

window of Constance's cell; who, soon after, began again her promised narrative, in which she had before been interrupted, just as she had entered upon it.

CHAPTER IX.

Come, melancholy! silent power,
Companion of my lonely hour.

CARTER.

" My father was a nobleman of great
" property, and I am his only child, at
" least the only one living, and am, of
" course, entitled to the estates and pos-
" sessions he left, which were entailed
" upon his sons, if he had any at the time
" of his death, and, if they should die,
" without issue, upon me, and after my

" death without children, upon a first
" cousin.

" My relation, being impatient to
" come into possession, determined to
" make me a victim to his avarice and
" his extravagance. He has persecuted
" me from an early age; and I have
" great reason to suppose, has at-
" tempted my life several times, as the
" physicians declared, that some se-
" vere fits of sickness that I have been
" afflicted with, were caused by poison
" having been taken into the stomach;
" which, but for immediate assistance,
" would, they said, have proved fatal.
" He has, at last, succeeded in his de-
" signs, by placing me in this monas-
" tery, where he expects to keep me
" for life; having found means to gain
" over to his interest the Lady Abbess,

" who has informed me, that it is believ-
" ed in the world, that I have been
" some time dead, and that, in conse-
" quence, the king has confirmed my
" oppressor in the possession of the
" estates and title of my father.

" THIS information she has given me,
" to induce me to take the veil, which
" would preclude every possibility, by
" any unforeseen event happening,
" of my being ever delivered from this
" confinement, to dispute the usurper's
" right to possession. To drive me to
" this last step it is, that I am kept
" locked up in this confined place, de-
" nied the sight of the all-cheering sun,
" and the converse of my fellow crea-
" tures: but, I am determined still to
" trust to the never-failing justice of
" that omniscient Being, who never

" views innocence in distress with an
" eye of apathy, and to continue to re-
" sist the ill treatment I receive, and
" the threats I endure, refusing the
" veil, let the personal consequence to
" me be what it may.

" EVERY morning that the Lady Ab-
" bess visits me, she renews the con-
" versation; when finding me firm
" to my resolution, she always con-
" cludes with repeating the threat,
" that I shall never be suffered to set a
" foot out of this cell, till I comply,
" and bid the world an irrevocable
" adieu.

"AFTER the death of my father, which
" was soon followed by that of my mo-
" ther, events which I was too young
" to remember, my cousin, as guardian

" to my brother and myself, took pos-
" session of, and managed the estates.
" My brother dying soon after, the
" whole devolved upon me, which he
" then managed in my name.

" When I was yet very young, I was
" sent to a distant convent; where, as I
" grew up, the greatest pains were
" taken, to persuade me to embrace a
" religious life, without effect: indeed,
" if I had possessed a natural inclina-
" tion that way, the severe treatment I
" there met with, by my cousin's direc-
" tions, would have deterred me from
" such a choice; treatment most cruel,
" in itself, and, on my part, wholly un-
" merited. But it appears plain, that
" his aim was to accomplish my death,
" by slow, and to the world, imperceptible degrees. In order to effect

" to effect which, I have, during the " whole of many inclement nights, been " confined in cold and damp cells, open " to the air, and exposed to the bale- " ful effects of the dank dew, which " fell in abundance on my defence- " less head. This severity frequently " brought on dangerous fevers; but " the strength of my constitution al- " ways conquered the disease, to the " no small disappointment of my cruel " and unjust relation.

" After experiencing the most se- " vere treatment, for a number of years, " I returned home. I was now ap- " proaching to that age, at which I " should be competent to take upon " me the management of my own con- " cerns, and he felt, by anticipation, " the inconvenience he would suffer

" by being deprived of those funds,
" from which he had been accustomed
" to draw the means of maintaining
" himself, in all his unbounded extra-
" vagance, and excessive intemperance.
" Not only so, but he had also to dread
" being called to account for the money
" he had already dissipated.

" WHILST I was at the convent, he
" never took the least notice of me,
" and he continued that distant beha-
" viour, for some time after my return
" home. All at once, he became very
" attentive and assiduous in his manner,
" accompanying me to balls, and other
" entertainments; and frequently re-
" quested the favour of my hand for the
" evening. It was with surprise that I
" saw this change in his behaviour to
" me; but that surprise was at an end,

" when he declared that he entertained
" for me the most ardent love, and so-
" licited me in the strongest manner,
" to make him happy, by consenting to
" become his wife.

" I was not so young, but I could
" clearly see the motive of his pretend-
" ed passion for me. I had before, from
" his ill treatment of me at the convent,
" formed in my mind, a dislike to him,
" which was now grown into a rooted
" aversion; the more I contemplated
" his conduct, the more I found reason
" to detest him. It would scarcely be
" thought possible, that deceit could be
" carried so far; that the same man
" could now be courting my smiles,
" and watching my looks, that he
" might anticipate my wishes, who
" was, but a few months back, plotting

" my death, by secret means, and slow
" degrees, to avoid the suspicion, that
" his guilty soul told him, would at-
" tach upon him, if it was attempted
" in a more open way.

" You will, perhaps, think that I
" wronged him, in suspecting that he
" was the author of my sufferings in the
" convent; and, that it was as impossi-
" ble as it was unnatural, that a relation
" should behave in that guilty manner:
" but I assure you, I have grounds suf-
" ficiently strong, to warrant my assert-
" ing, that all I suffered was by his di-
" rection, which I was informed of by
" an aged sister of the order.

" She one day called me to her, and
" told me, she had something to impart
" to me, of the greatest consequence

" for me to know. It respected, she
" said, the relation by whom I was pla-
" ced in that convent. As I was then
" about leaving those holy walls, she
" continued, it was her duty to put me
" upon my guard against him; for, she
" had a certain knowledge, that he was
" laying plots for the destruction of my
" life, since he had failed in his wishes
" for me to put on the religious habit;
" and, that all the severity I had un-
" dergone, was in hopes of breaking
" my constitution, and bringing me to
" a premature grave, in order that he
" might have unmolested possession of
" my estates and property.

" After this information, it is not
" likely that I could listen to his addres-
" ses with an approving ear, even if I

" could have overlooked the disparity
" of our years. I gave him such a denial,
" as I meant should not leave him any
" hopes, that I might ever be brought
" to a change of sentiment in his favour.
" He did not, however, desist from his
" pursuit, but continued to torment me,
" till he saw that a mutual and ardent
" affection, subsisted between an ami-
" able young Chevalier and me; an af-
" fection, that I am convinced, was as
" pure, as it was disinterested on his
" part; and as chaste, as it is lasting on
" mine. But I shall never see him
" more; perhaps, with the rest of the
" world, imposed upon, he believes me
" dead, and has taken to his arms a
" more happy love; whilst I must end
" my days in wretchedness and misery,
" locked up in this narrow cell, shut

" out from the common air, and depriv-
" ed of the light of the blessed sun, that
" cheers the eyes of all besides.

" After our attachment was disco-
" vered by my relation, and I had given
" a peremptory refusal to his addresses,
" he no longer thought it necessary to
" carry on the deception, and relapsed
" into his former neglect of me.

" I was not sorry to be relieved from
" his importunities, as I had more fre-
" quent opportunities of seeing, and pass-
" ing my time with the object of my
" affections, between whom and my-
" self, the day of marriage was con-
" cluded on. My relation affected to be
" easy under the idea of our approach-
" ing union, whilst at the same time he

" was laying schemes effectually to pre-
" vent its ever taking place, and which
" he was but too successful in accom-
" plishing.

" I WAS one evening sitting alone,
" contemplating by anticipation, the
" hours of happiness and of joy I
" should pass in the loved society of
" the dear man of my choice, when
" two ruffians in disguise entered, and,
" without any ceremony, hurried me
" out of a private door into a carriage,
" the blinds of which they drew up.—
" After driving some time, they stop-
" ped, and the door was opened. The
" night was perfectly dark when we
" alighted, and I knew not where I
" was. I was forced through a door,
" which was immediately shut, and I

" was dragged forward through many
" winding passages, till I arrived at
" this cell, into which I was put. The
" door was locked upon me, and has
" never since been opened, nor, till I
" saw you, have I ever beheld any per-
" son but the Lady Abbess, who comes
" to this grated window every morn-
" ing, to bring me my scanty subsist-
" ence for the day, and to renew her
" persuasions for me to take the veil,
" and her threats of perpetual confine-
" ment in this place, if I persist in re-
" fusing."

THE miserable and abused Constance here ended her narrative; which made a deep impression on the mind of Matilda, who felt by sympathy for the sufferings of the unhappy victim of ty-

ranny, and of avarice. She retired to her chamber with a heavy heart, and indulged in giving vent to her own sorrow, in a flood of tears.

CHAPTER X.

Hark! the length'ning roar continuous runs
Athwart the rifted deep: at once it bursts,
And piles a thousand mountains to the clouds.

THOMSON.

MATILDA had, as usual, continued in the chapel one morning after prayers, with an intention of visiting the cell of Constance, when she had the mortification to find the door that led into the passage was locked, nor did she ever after succeed in her many attempts to

gain admission. The deprivation of the conversation of the amiable prisoner was a great trouble to her, as it was the only solace she had during her forcible detention in the monastery.

As she was returning, after one of her fruitless efforts, across the chapel, she saw a nun coming from the road, that, she imagined, led to the garden. She let her get out of sight, when she went to the place at which she had entered, and found a door open; she passed through it into a dark and winding vaulted way, at the farther end of which she saw a light. She made up to it; and soon found herself in the garden. She traversed it round, in hopes of finding some way by which she might get out, but in vain, it being surrounded on three sides by lofty walls, and on

the fourth by a broad and rapid river, which, she afterwards learned, was the Rhone, upon the banks of which, the monastery of Saint Catherine stood.

The day was fast declining, and she was returning from the garden, in despair of finding any means of escape, when she discerned, floating down the tide, a small boat, in which was one man only. She made a signal with her handkerchief, which attracted the attention of the boatman, and he rowed to the shore.

She learned from him, that he was a fisherman belonging to Arles, from which place he was going to the mouth of the river, to exercise his calling.—She agreed with him to take her on

board, and to land her at the first convenient place they came to.

Just as she was stepping in, she heard the tinkling of the convent bell, which convinced her that she was missed; and, at the same time, saw several of the sisterhood enter the garden, followed by the Lady Abbess. She increased her promise of reward to the fisherman, urging him to push off with all speed; which he had scarcely done, before the Superior reached the bank; who called to the man to put back; but to no purpose, the thoughts of the reward he was to have, making him deaf to her voice, and the boat sailed swiftly down with the tide.

As soon as she was out of danger of

pursuit, she inquired at what place he could best land her.

" WHY, as to the matter of that, Mademoiselle," said he, " I can land you on " the bank opposite; but you will then " be a long way from any large town, " which would not be a pleasant thing, " now that it is getting dark; and as I " am going to fish the morning's tide " off the Hieres, I should recommend " you to be landed at Marseilles, at " which port I can touch, without any " hindrance to my voyage."

MATILDA acquiesced in the recommendation of the fisherman, and made up her mind to remain in the boat all night.

THE wind had blown pretty briskly

when she embarked, but now they approached the mouth of the river, it increased to a violent gale. The little vessel was tossed about by the contentious elements, a sport to every wave. —Now suddenly raised on a swelling mountain's top, which by the strong force of the northern blast, broke under them, and precipitated them into an abyss of dire descent; again they mounted, again to fall. The boatman attempted to run his vessel on shore, preferring to encounter danger on the surf-beaten beach, rather than be driven out to sea, without any probable chance of meeting with assistance. But all his efforts were vain; the wind, which was blowing from the north, kept increasing still, and drove them out into the Mediterranean sea. The boatman gave up all for lost, and left the tiller, relinquish-

ing the management of his boat to the guidance and direction of that Pilot, who alone can conduct with safety the daring mariner through the boisterous storm of a hurricane tremendous, or cause him to meet a watery grave beneath the smooth and oily surface of the calmest sea.

MATILDA with difficulty kept herself from being borne overboard by some of the waves, that continually washed over them; and, to add to the horror of her situation, the night was of that pitchy darkness, that she could not see from one end of their little boat to the other.

THEY were now, in middle of the night, at a distance from land; and from the direction of the wind, that

distance was increasing, and not any appearance of the force of the storm abating. In this dreadful situation, however, Matilda had strength of mind sufficient to exert herself, under the terrible prospect of immediate death, and she laboured, in assisting the boatman, to lade the water out of the boat, to keep her from sinking; which, he afterwards declared, he should not have been able alone to have prevented, as she took in so much more, than it was possible for him to empty her of.

The wind now began to abate, and they were in hopes that it would soon subside; but the darkness still continued. They had, however, soon after to encounter it, coming with, if possible, increased violence, from the north-west; at the same time, the thick black clouds,

that covered the high arch o'er their heads, opened, and let through the forked fire of heaven; which was followed by a tremendous crash of thunder, that rolled awfully through the vast expanse, and powered out in cataracts, a deluge of rain.

THE wind continued to blow with outrageous fury; the electric fluid darted its sulphureous fire; the thunder rolled awfully dreadful; the rain still fell in overwhelming torrents; and the sea roared with a tremendous noise, the waves running mountains high, when the long-wished for dawn appeared.

THE sun soon after peeped through his orient window; and, mounting his golden car, journeyed on high, spreading

his refulgent rays around, and dispersing the watery clouds; the wind, at the same time, falling to a gentle breeze, softly wafting their little vessel, o'er the lately troubled deep.

They had, during the night, been driven so great a distance out to sea, that they could not discern any land, nothing but the crispy waves being to be seen in every direction around them. The boatman was seaman enough, to know the course he should steer, to regain the French coast; but unfortunately his rudder had been unshipped during the storm, and he had lost it.—They had now cause to apprehend a more horrible death than that they had lately escaped from, by the violence of the elements. The fisherman had pro-

vided himself with provisions, to serve him for the time he was likely to be out, but they had all been washed overboard, and they were in the middle of the Mediterranean, with not a morsel of food on board; and their fears told them, that there was no probability of meeting with any vessel, by which they might be released from their perilous situation.

The day passed on in anxious watching, and night was fast approaching, in which they anticipated all the horrors of the preceding one, as the wind was again rising, and began to blow with more violence than it had done all the day; added to which, they were almost exhausted with thirst and hunger.

JUST as the sun was sinking in his western couch, the boatman, with joy, called out, "A sail!" They discerned, at a considerable distance, a stately bark, proudly ploughing the yielding sea, and steering a course, that must soon bring her very near the spot where they were.

MATILDA waved her white handkerchief as high as her arm could hold it, and had the satisfaction to find that her signal was answered.

DARKNESS soon after came on apace; at length, night had spread her sable cloak, and they lost sight of the ship. Their hopes were now depressed, as much as they had been before elated. The boatman hallooed as loud as he

could, but his voice was drowned in the roaring of the waves. They kept their eyes anxiously directed towards the point in which they had seen the vessel, in hopes that they should perceive a light, which they thought the master would hang out for their guide.

They eagerly catched the noise upon the ear, of the passing breeze, sometimes magnifying it into the voices of the mariners on board the wished for ship; and when it died away, they were ready to sink with disappointment.

After being, for some hours, the sport of alternate hopes and fears, the report of a gun, at a short distance, relieved them from their anxiety, by convincing them that the ship was near.

The boatman again shouted with all his strength, and was now answered by the crew.

They were by this time, along side the vessel, from whence an accommodation ladder was put down, and Matilda and the boatman were soon on board. She was shewn into a neat little cabin, where, after having taken some refreshment, of which she stood in so much need, she retired to rest; the passengers, of whom she understood there were some of her own sex, having, she was told, been in bed some time.

The fatigue she had undergone, both bodily and mentally, had prepared her to receive kind sleep, which soon visited her eyelids, and she passed the re-

mainder of the night in sweet repose; and did not awake in the morning, till she received a polite message from one of the passengers, requesting she would breakfast in the state cabin.

CHAPTER XI.

All this amazement can I qualify.

SHAKESPEAR.

MATILDA dressed herself as quickly as possible, and repaired, agreeably to the invitation she had received, to the state cabin, where breakfast was ready laid out, and waiting for her.

As she entered, she heard a voice call out, " Good Heaven, Matilda Mont-

" fort!" and soon perceived that it proceeded from the Countess Villeroy.

After the first transports of surprise were over, at meeting in that extraordinary manner at sea, Matilda, by the Countess's desire, related all that had befallen her, that was in any way connected with her present situation, since she left Villeroy castle. The Countess listened with great attention, and then mentioned the circumstance that had induced her to take a voyage by sea. She had never recovered completely she said, the effects of the bruises that she had received, when she was overturned in her carriage, and was advised by a consultation of physicians, who had been called in, to try what the sea air would do for her; and having an estate in Sicily, she had determined to

visit that island; and was then bound there.

"I HAVE often wished," continued "she, that you had been at the castle, at "the time I determined on my voyage, "that I might have had the pleasure of "your company and conversation; but "little did I think, that wish would be, "in effect accomplished, by such an ex- "traordinary meeting."

THE wind continuing fair, they proceeded quickly on their voyage. The next day they made Corsica, when they passed through the straits of Bonifacio, between that island and Sardinia. As they sailed past the former, they admired the rude landscape, that presented itself to the view; the barren rocks, and mountains huge, covered with lofty

trees, that waved their proud heads, and bent their stubborn trunks to the stormy blast of the boisterous north; whilst the foaming surge beneath, lashed its wave-worn shores. In the latter, they viewed the diversified country with pleasure; here, a hill rising majestically to the sight; there, a valley, beautifully fertile, covered with the verdant velvet sod, and plentifully watered by the Sacer's pellucid stream, which runs meandering almost the island's length, till lost to the eye, beneath the lofty mountains in the north.

They soon arrived safely in Sicily, landing at Palermo: at a few leagues distance from which, was the Countess's estate, that she had come to reside a short time at.

After stopping a day or two, to recover from the effects of the voyage, they left that city, and reached in safety, the cottage of Saint Reale.

It was situated in an open campaign country, the variegated bosom of the earth alternately covered with the golden crop and verdant meads, which gave it a richness in appearance, not to be surpassed. At a distance was seen Etna, that tremendous mountain, vomiting in volumes its sulphureous smoke, out of its furnace-heated bowels, which rose in black columns aspiring to the skies; sometimes mixed with bright flame, and hurling into the air fragments of its burning sides, threatening destruction where-e'er they fall, terrible to behold! But, how terrible, when its overcharged cal-

dron sends forth, in streams of liquid fire, its mineral contents, rolling in a burning river o'er the soil beneath, overwhelming towns and villages, and with them, thousands of their hapless inhabitants, sweeping away all before its resistless current, till it runs, with ungovernable fury into the bubling sea!!!

THE house was built and fitted up in the cottage style; it was the usual residence of the farmer, who rented the estate, and which had now been prepared purposely, for the visit of the Countess, to whom it was, of course, resigned. It was surrounded by vineyards, and plantations of olive trees, of which latter, numerous bowers and groves were formed, in which the Countess and Matilda used to sit, enjoying the cooling breeze from the sea, whilst they

were shaded from the mid-day heat of the scorching sun, by the spreading branches meeting o'er their heads.

Sometimes, they would walk into the vineyard, whilst the sturdy vintage-men were plucking the clustered produce of the spreading vine, and bearing their burdens to the loaded press, from which the deep vat was filled with the precious juice, to cheer the heart of man. At other times, they would ramble into the waving fields, covered with Ceres's golden treasure, the stalks bending under the well-filled ears, whilst the ruddy harvest-men, with dividing hand, laid the rich store prostrate on the earth, the following females binding it into sheaves, with which they reared the shocked pile. Or, they would, with an eye attent, watch the

progress of the silk-worm's labour, spinning from its exhaustless bowels the costly thread, to deck the shoulders of emperors and of kings.

THE Countess had not been long in Sicily, before she found herself much recruited, and had every prospect of being shortly perfectly reinstated in her former health. She was already so far recovered, as to be able, without too much fatigue, to make excursions to different parts, the object of which, was health united to pleasure.

THEY took a circuitous rout round a great part of the island; they visited the port of Messina, from whence was shipped merchandize to all parts of Europe. From thence they went to Catania, at the foot of Mount Etna, which town

and port had been almost destroyed, about a year before, by a terrible convulsion of the earth, in which nearly twenty thousand of the wretched inhabitants were swallowed alive into the gaping chasm. They left Catania and went to Syracuse, where they stopped some days, the Countess having several friends who resided in the neighbourhood.

Near this city was situated the palace of the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius, a part of which still remained, majestic in its ruins. The Countess and Matilda visited this famous spot, that had formerly been the scene of so many cruelties, and so much grandeur. They examined, with attention, each part—the mouldering towers, continually falling in fragments to the earth; the roofless

walls, tottering with the passing gale; and the numerous subterraneous ways, now almost choked up with brambles and with briars.

After satisfying their curiosity, as they were turning out of the ruins to depart, the Countess, observing something lying on the ground, stooped to take it up, and found that it was a miniature picture. Upon looking at it, she saw that it was an exact resemblance of Matilda. The surprise of both was great, but most of the latter, who said that she had never given her portrait to any body; nay, that she had never even sat for it, and she did not know that one had ever been taken of her. It was plain, however, the resemblance being so striking, that this could not have been meant to represent any

other person; and the greatest astonishment was, how it was taken, and in what manner it found its way into Sicily; and, in particular, into the ruins of this palace. The Countess, however, put it in her pocket, trusting to time to unravel the mystery.

They now left the ruins, and, in a day or two after, Syracuse; continuing their journey round the island, till they again came to Palermo, from whence they went to Saint Reale, where they arrived in safety, with the Countess's health still improved.

CHAPTER XII.

..... Thanks to this gallant youth,
Whose valour sav'd me from a wretched death.

HOME.

THE object the Countess had in view, in taking the voyage to Sicily, being the recovery of her health, by inhaling the sea breeze, she took every opportunity of being out in the open air; on which account, she preferred walking, accompanied by Matilda, to being drove in a close carriage. One of their favourite

walks was along the banks of the Salsa, by which river her estate was bounded on one side.

The Countess one evening leaving Matilda engaged with her lute, from which she would not disturb her, strolled alone, along the river's bank, and walking farther than she thought of, was warned by the purple shade of declining day, that it was time to return. The sun had set behind the Sardinian isle, and darkness was fast approaching, before she reached the vicinity of the cottage of Saint Reale.

As she was turning into a bower of olive trees, that led to the garden, a man sprung out; and holding a stiletto to her breast, demanded her purse.

She screamed out at the sight of the naked weapon. The sound of her voice attracted the attention of some harvest-men, returning from the field, who were hastening to her, but were yet a considerable distance off. The revengeful ruffian, finding that he was disappointed of his booty, was upon the point of plunging his stiletto in her breast; for which purpose his arm was raised, when it was suddenly arrested by a stranger, who had heard her cries, as he was passing through the road near, and flew to her assistance.

The robber now turned his attention towards his new enemy, whom he attacked with great fury, but he was, at length, obliged to yield to the prowess of his adversary, and he fell upon the ground, covered with wounds.

By this time the husbandmen had come up, and immediately recognised the robber to be a desperate villain, who had kept the country in a state of fear, for a length of time back, through the many depredations he had committed, generally attended by murder; and, for whose apprehension, the Viceroy had offered a large reward, but nobody could be found, bold enough to encounter the danger of meeting him.

The deliverer of the Countess attended her home, at her invitation. Upon entering the parlour, where Matilda was at her music, he started; when they, looking for a moment on each other, exclaimed at the same time, "Matil-" da!"—"Dumain!"

Dumain had scarcely pronounced

her name, but, reeling back, he fell upon a sopha behind him, and the Countess soon discovered that he had received a wound in her defence, the blood from which, flowed in a copious stream. Matilda rang the bell with such violence, as instantly brought in several of the domestics, who were dispatched different ways, for the first surgeon they could meet with. They soon brought one who succeeded in stopping the blood, but gave a very unfavourable opinion of the wound.

The next time he dressed it, he declared that he had every reason to apprehend a gangrene to ensue; which, nothing but the most profound judgment, and the greatest skill could possibly prevent; and at the same time, stretching himself so as to stand an inch taller, and pulling

down his ruffles, he said, that if skill and judgment would save his patient, he was very fortunate in having the attendance of a surgeon, in whom they were united in an eminent degree.

Dumain, however, evidently grew better, under the hands of this profound practitioner, during the time that he was pronouncing him to be in the greatest danger; he only magnifying the difficulty of the case, to increase his own consequence, and the value of his superior abilities in his profession.

Although Dumain mended, it was very slowly, as the weakness occasioned by the loss of blood was so great, as to require a considerable time to recruit it. He was, however, so far convalescent as to be able to sit up an hour or two,

in the day, which time, the Countess and Matilda passed with him; the former of whom, was sincere in her many expressions of the sense of the obligation she owed to him.

At length, he was able to walk out, after which he recovered his strength fast: but his wound was yet very far from being healed, and seemed, as if it would require the surgeon's attendance for some time longer.

As Matilda and he were together one day, she expressed a desire to know, what fortunate circumstance had so unexpectedly brought him to the assistance of the Countess, at that critical moment.

He told her, that after he had taken

his leave of her and her father, he went to Montpelier, to try the effects of that air upon his constitution, and to have the advice of the physicians there; although he expected more from the change of scene, than either change of air, or their advice. After remaining some time there, he travelled about, from place to place, without any amendment in his health or spirits; and then determined upon taking a voyage across the gulph of Genoa, to Leghorn. From thence he travelled by land to Naples, through which kingdom he passed, and crossed the streights of Messina, into Sicily; where he had been about a month, but still without any serious benefit to his health.

"O, MATILDA!" said he, "cruel "and insurmountable circumstances

" have planted a dagger in my breast,
" that nothing can remove on this side
" the grave. Yet, I feel, at this mo-
" ment, an alleviation of my pain, in
" the ever valued society of the most
" excellent of her sex. I have enjoyed
" more happiness during the short pe-
" riod I have passed here, than in the
" whole time since I left the once
" happy vale. O, the hours of felicity
" I there have passed! Hours too happy
" to continue long, too happy ever to
" be expected to return!"

" The time I passed in cheerfulness
" and peace," said Matilda, " at the
" cottage in the vale, was the happiest
" of my life!"

" May the miserable Dumain," said he, " presume to think, that he was

" assistant towards promoting that hap-
" piness?"

" Yes, Dumain, I do not hesitate to
" say, that when we have passed our
" evenings, either in joining the in-
" structive conversation of my dearest
" father, or in the gratifying amusement
" our little concerts afforded; your ju-
" dicious remarks in the first, and the
" music you brought from your German
" flute in the latter, did materially add
" to the pleasure of the scene."

" O, what condescending goodness!
" May I hope you still feel pleasure in
" the company of Dumain?"

" I always esteemed you as a valued
" friend, Dumain; and, therefore,
" took pleasure in your company; and,

" as I have had no reason to alter " my opinion of you, I have still the " same value for you as a friend, and " have still the same pleasure in your " society."

" O, MATILDA!—" At that moment the Countess came up to them, and prevented him from proceeding. —They walked together to the cottage, conversing upon indifferent subjects.

DUMAIN, now that he could walk abroad, used frequently to amuse himself in drawing landscapes, from the adjacent country, several of which he had finished, and with which the Countess adorned the walls of her little parlours.

He had taken his seat near the window of the parlour in which Matilda was playing upon her lute, with his paper before him, and his pencil in his hand, when the Countess, who was walking in the garden, came near to the spot he was in. Seeing him intent on his pursuit, she was unwilling to interrupt him. As she was softly passing him, she cast her eyes over his shoulder, upon the paper before him, and observed, not a landscape, as she supposed he was drawing, but a portrait nearly completed, of Matilda.

Dumain saw the Countess, and was confused. She rallied him on his talent for drawing from nature, and on his judgment in selecting interesting objects, which still added to his confusion, and he made some awkward replies.

THE conversation brought Matilda to the window; when the Countess said, "Dumain is an excellent artist, Matil-"da; he has not a talent for drawing "landscapes only, but takes likenesses "admirably also. I fancy Dumain," continued she, putting her hand upon his shoulder, "that is not the first por-"trait you ever drew. I think I could "produce one from the same pencil. "Does not this bear evident marks of "the same skilful master's hand?"

SAYING which, she pulled out of her pocket the miniature, she found in the ruins of Dionysius's palace at Syracuse.

DUMAIN owned it to be his, and that he had taken the likeness by stealth, at

the vale Le Pui, in the same manner he had just been discovered doing here.

PUTTING it into her pocket again, she said, " I will keep and value this, " both on account of the person of " whom it is so exact a representation, " and of the artist, to whom I am under " such lasting obligations; and must re- " quest you will sit, Dumain, for your " picture, which I will keep as its com- " panion."

MATILDA blushed, and felt uncomfortable. Dumain bowed, and stammered a complimentary assent.

IT appeared that Dumain was at Syracuse, at the same time that the Countess and Matilda were there, and that

he had been in the ruins of the palace but a few minutes before them, where he had taken out the portrait of the latter, to feast his eyes on her adored likeness, when the ribbon, that fastened it round his neck, broke, or came untied, as he imagined, by which, the picture, instead of slipping into his bosom, had fallen upon the ground, where it was found by the Countess. He missed it soon after he had left the ruins, and supposing that he had dropped it, returned to seek it, but the Countess and Matilda, having in the mean time been there, all his efforts to find it were vain, and he was obliged, with grief, to give up the search; little thinking, that he should so soon have the happiness of beholding the original.

Now, that Dumain had nearly reco-

vered from the effects of his wound, and was able to travel, he would, however reluctantly, have taken his leave of the Countess and Matilda; but at the earnest solicitation of the former, he consented to remain, till their return to France, and to take his passage in the same ship.

He felt the propriety of tearing himself from the presence of the adored, but forbidden object of his love, but had not resolution enough, to withstand the invitation of the Countess, or to make any effort to break through his own inclinations, which naturally led him to wish to protract his stay, as long as he could enjoy the happiness of the society of the idol of his heart.

He had not only recovered the same

state of health he was in, at the time he received the wound in defence of the Countess, but now enjoyed that blessing in an equal degree to what he had done, when he first became acquainted with Matilda; her loved presence having done more for him, than the change of air and scene, he had so ineffectually tried, in different parts of France and Italy.

With his former health, he also recovered his former spirits, the dejection and melancholy that hung like a cloud o'er his features, now gave way to cheerful smiles and merry jokes.

He every day grew in favour with the Countess. Independent of the gratitude she felt towards him, for the inestimable service he had performed for her, at the

risk of his own life, his great good sense, and the many excellent qualities of his mind, had endeared him to her, in no common degree.

In an evening, now that he was recovered, they generally had their little concert, the Countess touching the chords of the mellow harp, Matilda playing sweetly upon the lute, and Dumain breathing out the soft notes of his German flute, which he would sometimes lay aside, and accompany the harp and lute with his powerful, manly voice. At other times, Matilda would pour out her vocal melody to the music of his hautboy or his flute, ravishing the ear with delight and enchantment.

To vary the amusements of their little party, Dumain or Matilda would

beguile the evening, by reading aloud, from some book, chosen by the Countess, out of the select little library she had brought with her, which consisted of works, at once instructive and entertaining. Or, laying aside the book, would pass the hours in conversation, congenial to the mind, and to the ear delectable.

The Countess said, that she had never before experienced enjoyment of life, equal to what she now partook of, in her retirement. None of the pleasures and festivities of Villeroy Castle had the charms of the little cottage she now inhabited, and of the retired, though cheerful life she now passed in her little society. Whether she joined her small party in the music-room; mixed in their conversation; listened to Du-

main or Matilda reading; or rambled by the Salsa's sedgy side, watching the sports of the finny tribe; she found abundant food for amusement, and for entertainment, that made her regret that the time was approaching, which she had fixed for her return to Villeroy Castle.

CHAPTER XIII.

.....A melancholy man,

.....

Austere and lonely.

HOME.

AT a short distance from Saint Reale, at the foot of the mountain of that name, was an ancient abbey, which bore no mean marks of its former consequence, but was now in a state of ruin. It was seated in the bottom of a valley, sequestered and retired, surrounded by

many lofty-growing trees—the spiring poplar, the portly chesnut, and the towering pine. A rapid stream descending from the mountain's height, washed the base of its mouldering walls, and then took a meandering course, till it mixed with the Western sea.

To this retreat of privacy, and of retirement, Dumain frequently paid a visit, where he could, without interruption, indulge in the melancholy ideas that would, at intervals, obtrude themselves into his thoughts. At such times, no place so well suited the dejected state of his mind, as the gloomy ruins of this desolated pile, rendered more gloomy by the thick-growing, umbrageous wood, which threw an awful darkness o'er the place, the friend of sorrow and of grief.

Curiosity had never prompted him to examine the inside of the abbey, beyond the part that immediately presented itself to view upon the first entrance. He now thought of exploring its hidden recesses.

He mounted a stone staircase, which was in a state of tolerable preservation; it brought him to a suite of rooms, the floors of which in many places were, from decay, impassable. From thence he went into a long gallery, on each side of which were a number of apartments; and at the end of it a narrow winding staircase, which he descended, and found himself in a subterraneous vault, which seemed to have been hewn out of the rock. From it branched several narrow arched passages, along one of which he went, that led

to what appeared to have formerly been the chapel, the black marble table at the altar, with a pair of massy candlesticks upon it, being still entire. Leaving the chapel, he entered another passage, and pursued his way in it for some time; when, finding it continue its course farther than he expected, and nothing but darkness before him, he determined to retrace his steps. He turned his face towards the way he had entered, where now all was darkness also.

He wandered about, without being able to find the path he had first come along, till from the length of time that he had been there, he knew the night must be far advanced.

In this situation, he had no alterna-

tive, but to determine to remain where he was, till the light of the morning should direct him how to find the road out.

He sat down upon a projecting stone that he felt in the vault where he was, to wait the passing of the heavy hours of night. He had not been seated long, before his ears were assailed by a deep groan, which appeared to issue from some place very near him. It was repeated louder, and longer. He listened attentively, but did not again hear it. Shortly after, he perceived, at a distance before him, a pale blue glimmering light, which moved slowly along, and disappeared. He left the seat he had taken, and went towards the place where he had seen it, but it was no longer to be discovered, and he

remained in impenetrable darkness. He called aloud, but was only answered by his own voice, which reverberated with a thundering sound.

After many a weary effort to discover from whence the groans and the light proceeded, he saw the grey dawn of morn peeping through the distant openings of the numerous vaulted passages, that he now discovered to surround him. The sun soon after rose above the orient horizon, and threw a feeble light into the place where he was, just sufficient to enable him to find his way.

He was determined to proceed in his search, in hopes of finding something that might lead to a discovery of the cause of what he had heard and seen

the last night. He found the subterraneous vaults and passages so extensive, that he was convinced they occupied a space considerably larger than that which the ruins of the building stood upon. Here, he came to magnificent galleries, which led to sumptuous baths, lined with the finest marble, and filled with pure water of crystal transparency; there, to a paved highway, on which were many grottos, cut out of the solid rock, and curiously ornamented with coral and scarce sea shells, with apertures at the top, that let in the sun, shedding his rays upon the polished brightness of their various-coloured sides.

He followed the highway, till it brought him to a gentle ascent; up

which he slowly rose, and found himself on the mountain's side, the road he had travelled being cut under it.

He returned back the way he had come, being determined, if possible, to explore every part of the subterraneous vaults; and not to desist, till he had either gone through all, or found out the cause of the noise he had heard, and from whence the light he had seen proceeded.

After a considerable time spent in his search, he again came to the chapel, near which place it was that he had heard the groans. He entered the passage from which he thought the noise issued, and examined carefully every part of it. At last, he came to a door

that was shut, and appeared to be made fast on the inside. Through a crack he saw a man, sitting in a mournful posture, with his head rested on his hands, which were supported by an old table. He rose, and traversed the apartment with uneven gait, then stopped, and with uplifted hands, and eyes that were to the ceiling fixed, uttered a loud groan that shook his whole frame.

Dumain knocked at the door; the man started, and seizing a massy broadsword, put himself in a posture of defence, as if he expected an immediate attack from superior force, keeping his hand firm upon the door, but did not speak. Dumain knocked again; again he saw the man within start with con-

vulsive agitation; but still he was silent. Dumain then, raising his voice, said, that curiosity had led him to search into the caverns of the abbey, and that having lost himself, he could not find his way out; he requested, therefore, that whoever might be in that apartment, would direct him, and put him in the right road.

The man then inquired how many persons there were. Being assured there was only one, he with great caution slowly opened the door with his left hand, whilst his right grasped the sword, ready to defend himself, if occasion required it. When Dumain entered unarmed, his alarm seemed to subside, and he laid down his weapon, but kept it close to him, that if any fresh

ground for fear should arise, he might easily again catch hold of it.

DUMAIN, seeing his precaution, assured him that he had no cause for apprehension from him, that he was a native of France, and a stranger in the island, and that chance only, had brought him to that place.

" THERE is an open ingenuousness " in your countenance," said the man, " that must make me believe you; if " you will, therefore, sacredly promise, " that you will not divulge to any living " person, that you have found an inha- " bitant here, I will direct you out; " shew you I dare not, for I have not " put my foot out of the abbey during " the day, since I first entered it."

DUMAIN promised that he would faithfully keep the secret that he wished him.

" IF I thought you would not," said the other, grasping his sword again, " you ———."

DUMAIN interrupted him, again assuring him that he need not be under any apprehension on his account. After some hesitation, he rose to direct him the way out of the subterraneous vaults.—Just as he had got his hand upon the door he stopped, and suddenly turning himself round, paced the room with hasty steps, wrapt in thought.

" IF I dare trust you," said he, " you " might be of essential service to me.

"You might ———." Then stopping, and again striding the room, he struck his hand upon his forehead, and continued some time in meditative silence.

At last, he added, "You are a native "of France, you said! Do you know "the Marquis de Chalons?"

Dumain told him he did not.

"Did you never hear of him either?"

Dumain answered in the negative.

"I repeat to you," said he, "that "there is an openness, and an ingenu-"ousness in your air and manner, that "speaks much in your favour, and I am "determined to ——."

HERE he again stopped, and again walked about the room in violent agitation; and then, as if he had been debating within himself, said, "I will take "time to consider of it." And turning to Dumain, he continued, "Will "you pay me another visit here?"

DUMAIN told him, that he would not only visit him again, but if he could be of any service to him, he would do the utmost in his power, towards restoring that peace of mind, he seemed to have lost.

THE man, then taking him by the hand, said, "I see, I may with safety "trust you, I will doubt no more.— "Come to me here to-morrow, as soon "as it is dark; I will be upon the

" watch for you, and conduct you into " this place, when I will inform you, " how you may be of the greatest ser- " vice to me."

He then took Dumain through several narrow winding passages, which he had not observed before, and conducted him to the bottom of a wide staircase, where, leaving him, he said, " At this " place, I will wait for you to-morrow " night. Don't fail to be punc- " tual."

Dumain promised him to be true to the appointment, and they, for the present, parted; the stranger turning back to his secret retreat, and the other to make the best of his way to Saint Reale cottage.

As he was going from the landing of the staircase; he perceived that he was not at the same side of the abbey, at which he had entered the day before; and, that the heaps of ruins that lay in the way, would prevent him passing to the other side, except through the subterraneous road he had before come along. He was, therefore, obliged again to descend the stairs he had just mounted, and try to find another passage out.

He had gone down but a few steps, when he saw the stranger before him, who had been watching him, and who exclaimed, "Ha! I am mistaken in "my man, and you are returned to find "out the direct road to my room, that "you may lead on the officers, and

" claim the reward for delivering a de-
" linquent up to justice!"

DUMAIN told him that he had not any such idea, that the promise he had made, was to him sacredly binding.—He then succeeded in convincing him of the true reason of his return down the stairs, and requested he would lead him a road, that would take him to the other side of the abbey. After which, he was shewn a passage, that led the way he wished, and another part was fixed upon, for them to meet on the evening of the next day.

DUMAIN then left the ruins, and soon after the valley, ruminating on the extraordinary adventure he had met with. He determined, however, to see the end of it; and, that he would, for that

purpose, be true to the engagement he had made with the recluse, by repairing the next night, to the place he had pointed out to meet at.

CHAPTER XIV.

What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?
What means that hand upon that breast of thine?
Why holds thine eye that lamentable rheum,
Like a proud river peering o'er its bounds?
Be these sad sighs confirmers of thy words?

SHAKESPEAR.

AT the appointed time Dumain repaired to the abbey, and had not been long at the place agreed to meet at, before he was joined by its solitary inhabitant, who advanced with great caution, bearing in his hand a small lamp, which emitting a feeble light, served to render

more dismal the desolate arches round them.

" ARE you sure," said the stranger, " that you are alone? Are you certain " that you have not been watched?"

AFTER Dumain had satisfied him upon those heads, he led him through many intricate and winding passages, to the same apartment he had been in the last time he was there. They entered, and the man fastened the door on the inside, by putting a thick and heavy iron bar across it.

AFTER having seated themselves, he said, " In what I am going to unfold to " you, you will find matter sufficient to " strike at my existence; and, if it was " known, without a proper explana-

" tion on my part, and that explanation
" credited, my life must pay the forfeit
" of the apparent breach in the laws of
" humanity.

" THAT I have been guilty is true.
" But my fault consisted in being a
" passive spectator of others' wicked-
" ness, when in my power to prevent
" it, more than in any active crimes of
" my own.—Ha! am I endeavouring
" to palliate my guilt? Rather let me
" confess it to the utmost extent, and
" ease my tortured breast, by disclosing
" the secret of my wretchedness and
" woe, as much as the disclosure of
" such a burden can ease a breast so
" overloaded!

" YOU observe, by what I have al-

" ready said, that, by what I have to
" say, I am going to place my life in
" your hands; and, wretched as I am,
" life has yet even charms for me.
" That world, and those connections I
" have been for years shut out from,
" have still their value in these eyes;
" not a value stamped upon them by
" my former licentiousness, and my
" former excess; but, a true sterling
" value,—that of the enjoyment of the
" one in rational delights, and of
" the other, in the sweet converse of
" ever dear and near relatives; a loving
" and beloved wife, and children duti-
" ful and tender. You see, therefore,
" how much I trust to you, and per-
" ceive the dependence I place upon
" your honour and your promise; if,
" therefore, you should betray me——!"

DUMAIN, interrupting him, again assured him, that he would not, on any account whatever, be induced to disclose what he might wish to keep concealed; and that whatever he found it necessary, for the furtherance of the object he had in view, to acquaint him with, he might rely on its being as safely locked up in his bosom, as if he himself remained the guardian of the secret.

" I DO believe you," said the other; " yet, excuse the caution of a man who " has so much at stake as I have. I " will not, however, suffer doubt again " to invade my mind, but will proceed " to inform you, how you may render " me the service I wish.

" IN order the better to accomplish " this, it will be necessary that I should

" relate to you the events of some parts
" of my life, whilst others I have com-
" mitted to the paper that I hold in
" my hand, which I shall request you to
" deliver to the nobleman with whose
" name it is superscribed, whom you
" may easily find, by making inquiry in
" Paris, upon your return to France.

" I AM own cousin to the Chevalier
" Saint Fleur, being a son of his mo-
" ther's brother, Monsieur Lebrun,
" which is my name. We were
" brought up together at school, stu-
" died at the same university, and en-
" tered the world together. Saint
" Fleur, being of an extravagant and
" dissipated disposition, soon squander-
" ed away his fortune. He frequented
" the most noted gaming houses in
" Paris, and associated with men of the

" most unprincipled characters and ha-
" bits; among whom, was one who had,
" like himself, spent in debauchery and
" excess, a handsome fortune, and had
" been reduced to the necessity of wait-
" ing as a servant, in the same house in
" which he had associated with men of
" family and fortune.

" This man, whose name was Filesac,
" Saint Fleur thought might be service-
" able to him, in assisting him in his
" depredations on the purses of the fre-
" quenters of the gaming tables, he was
" in the habit of visiting. He accord-
" ingly took him out of the humble
" situation he was under the necessity
" of accepting, and raised him to that
" of dependent companion, that is,
" neither more or less, than pander to
" his dissolute pursuits.

" After many ineffectual efforts, he " succeeded in drawing me to the " gaming table. At first, I was very " fortunate in my stakes, and had won " large sums. This enticed me on, " and I played till I had lost nearly all " I was worth, not without strong sus- " picions on my mind, that Saint Fleur " and Filesac were in league against " me, and that I unfairly lost my pro- " perty, those two being the principal " winners; several circumstances after- " wards occurred, that served to cor- " roborate those suspicions.

" I was now reduced nearly to beg- " gary, with a dear wife whom I loved " as my own soul, and with an increas- " ing family of children, dependent up- " on the bounty of Saint Fleur, who " supported me only for diabolical and

" wicked purposes of his own, as after-
" wards appeared.

" In this situation, what could I do?
" On my family's account, and to keep
" them from starving, I was obliged to
" let them eat the bread of infamy, earn-
" ed by aiding the dissipation and de-
" bauchery of my pretended benefactor.

" I was now, from necessity, obliged
" to enter into the schemes and pursuits
" of Saint Fleur. What began through
" compulsion, soon became a habit, and
" I was not an unwilling partaker of
" his plunder at the gaming table, by
" means of loaded dice, and by slipping
" cards; of his midnight revels, and other
" practices of debauchery; as well as an
" assistant to his scenes of wickedness,
" which my soul now shudders to think

" of.—One atrocious act in particular, in
" which I was but too much concerned,
" lies so heavy on my soul, that I have
" no rest night or day. The murdered
" objects are ever before my eyes; wak-
" ing or sleeping, they haunt me still."

" After the commission of this act,
" which is related at full in this paper,
" Saint Fleur did not think it altoge-
" ther prudent to remain in Paris, for
" fear it might be suspected that he
" had some share in that transaction.
" It was a needless fear, for we had
" conducted matters in so cautious a
" manner, as to render even suspicion
" impossible. But true it is that,

Conscience does make cowards of us all,

" and he thought it unsafe to remain
" there any longer at present.

" The fear that could induce him to
" leave the capital, from the folly and
" licentiousness of which he drew all
" his resources to support his extrava-
" gance, must be very great. How-
" ever, he was not to be persuaded
" to the contrary, and we went into a
" distant province, to reside till he
" thought the matter would be forgot,
" or at least that it would be forgot
" that he was in Paris at the time of
" the murders.

" I took my wife and my family
" with me, as I had not the means of
" supporting them without the bounty
" of Saint Fleur, since I had dissipated
" my property at the gaming table.

" His finances soon grew very low,
" having no longer the same source

" from which he could draw supplies,
" and he was often in distress for the
" means of supporting existence.

" He had so far got into guilt, that
" he cared not how much farther he
" went, and he resolved upon commit-
" ting a most foul murder, in order to
" grasp unjustly the property of his in-
" tended victim. This, I absolutely re-
" fused to be concerned in; nay, I had
" resolution to go so far, as to say, that
" I would disclose all I knew of his
" former transactions, if he persisted in
" the idea. I prevailed in part, but I
" could not prevent him confining forci-
" bly the unhappy man, who was a sa-
" crifice to his inordinate extravagance.

" As long as it was in my power, by
" my presence, I took care that the mi-

" serable object wanted not for aught
" to render the hours of his solitary im-
" prisonment less irksome, hoping that
" something would soon turn out, to
" enable me to be the instrument of his
" enlargement. But a circumstance
" occurred, which at the time that it
" put Saint Fleur's villainy in a new
" light, robbed the unfortunate prisoner
" of my assistance, and drove me an
" exile from my native land, and from
" my unprotected wife and children.

" As I was one day returning home,
" after being out on some distant busi-
" ness for him, from the execution of
" which I was not expected till the
" next day, as I approached near the
" place of our residence, I heard issue
" from the midst of a thicket, most dis-

" mal female shrieks. I ran to the
" spot: you may conceive what was my
" astonishment, when I saw my wife
" struggling with a man, who had
" nearly overpowered her, and when
" I found that man to be Saint Fleur.

" In my rage I flew at him, to sacri-
" fice him to my revenge, but he was
" aware of my design, and put himself
" upon his defence. After a short con-
" test I disarmed him; when breaking
" his sword, I flung away the parts, and
" telling him I would not take his life,
" which was in my power, left him ne-
" ver to have converse with him again."

" I had scarcely got home, before
" Filesac came to me, and told me in
" confidence, that to be revenged of me,

" and to put me out of his way, St. Fleur
" had accused me to the magistrates of
" the police, as the author of the mur-
" ders I have mentioned, that had been
" lately committed. He told me if I
" did not instantly make my escape,
" the officers would be with me; and in
" that case, it would be impossible I
" could avoid conviction, as my accu-
" ser, who would not stop at any thing
" to accomplish an object he had set
" his mind upon, had determined to
" swear the fact against me.

" With scarcely time to bid my
" dearest family adieu, I left my house.
" I lay concealed in the neighbouring
" woods till night, when I commenced
" my journey, without thinking where
" I should go, or what steps I should
" take for my security. I spent many

" days and nights in wandering about;
" the former in the woods, or in the
" hidden recesses of a forest, and the
" latter in travelling the high road,
" without knowing where it would lead
" me to.

" At length, I found myself at a sea-
" port, and upon inquiry, learned that
" it was Toulon. I directed my steps
" towards the quay, in hopes of finding
" some vessel that was upon the point
" of leaving France; in which I was not
" disappointed.

" As I passed along the streets, I ob-
" served bills stuck upon the walls, de-
" scribing my person, and giving my
" name; offering a large reward for my
" apprehension, as a murderer fled from
" justice. I imagine, it was to the dis-

" guise, occasioned by the dirt on my
" clothes, of many days accumulation,
" and the growth of my beard, which
" had for the same length of time, been
" neglected, that I was indebted for my
" escape from notice.

" I EFFECTED my footing on board,
" and soon after we set sail, and arrived
" in due time at this island.

" IN my search for a secure and hid-
" den retreat, in case I should have been
" traced on board the ship I embarked
" in, which was known to be bound
" to Sicily, I found this abbey, and
" have lived in this subterraneous
" room, undisturbed by any one, for
" nearly twenty years past, never ven-
" turing to stir out in the day, and even

" in the night, never at any great dis-
" tance from the ruins.

" I HAVE now informed you of all,
" that is necessary for you to be ac-
" quainted with. The rest of the actions
" connected with my life, are written
" down upon paper, inclosed in this
" sealed cover, which you have promis-
" ed me to deliver, as it is directed, to
" the Marquis de Chalons; which, if it
" will be the means of interesting him
" in my favour, of convincing him of
" my comparative innocence, and of the
" forced part I took in Saint Fleur's
" wickedness, may be the instrument
" of enabling me to return into the
" bosom of my ever dear family, from
" whom I have been so long separated.

" I WILL not again affront you," conti-

nued Lebrun, " by doubting either your " secresy, your wish to be of service to " me, or your zeal in promoting that " service. After I have trusted you " with my life, you must feel the confi- " dence that I have in your honour, and " the reliance I have on your voluntary " offer of undertaking the business that " I commit to your care.

" THERE may be some parts, possibly, " that I have not been so explicit in, in " the paper in your hand, as I have in " my verbal narrative to you; if, there- " fore, that should be the case, I hope " you will explain what I have been " there deficient in.

" WHAT I principally mean is, that " possibly I have not been able to de- " pict, in colours, glowing and strong

" enough, the wretched state of my
" mind, occasioned by the recollec-
" tion of the former acts of my life.
" I have not been able to shew the
" Marquis my sorrow and my grief; to
" let him view my throbbing bosom;
" to let him hear the sighs and groans,
" with which I feed the wind; or to see
" my sunken cheeks and hollow eyes,
" the effect of deep-seated grief, and re-
" pentant melancholy. To represent
" these, I must trust to you: and, some-
" thing I feel within, informs me, that
" I trust my cause to a sincere and able
" advocate."

DUMAIN repeated his assurances of zeal, in the business intrusted to him, into which he would enter, he said, with as much anxiousness, and with as much ardour, to promote his future comfort,

as he would, if his own happiness depended on the result.

LEBRUN took him by the hand, which he pressed to his bosom; and, as they parted, offered up a prayer for his happiness, and for his safe passage across the Mediterranean sea. He then returned to his solitary apartment, in the gloomy vaults of the abbey, and Dumain ascended the narrow winding staircase he had gone down the first time he had visited the ancient ruins.

HE found the sun just rising above the eastern horizon, chasing away the grim shades of night, and shining with fiery splendour through the dark-hued trees, that spread umbrageous o'er the valley's gloom. He arrived at Saint

Reale, just as the Countess and Matilda were entering the breakfast room; and they finished their repast, without any inquiry being made as to the cause of his absence.

CHAPTER XV.

Here I and sorrows sit.

SHAKESPEAR.

THE Countess had fixed upon an early day, for embarking for France; waiting only for the return of the vessel from thence, in which she had concluded to take her passage, the arrival of

which was expected, within the course of a week at farthest.

" DURING this period, the whole of Matilda's mind was occupied, and her time employed, in arranging matters among the families of the poor people upon Saint Reale estate; whom, from a state of idleness and sloth, and consequently poverty, she had, under the sanction of the Countess, during the short time she had been here, brought to habits of industry; earning the necessaries of life, for which they were before dependant upon the eleemosynary gifts of the humane and charitable.

EVEN the children she had taught employment, in attending to the industrious silk-worm; to which, at first she found it was necessary to induce them, by of-

fering rewards for the greatest quantity of silk, produced in a given time. At length, the parents found the advantage in point of profit, derived from a life of industry; and, what they at first unwillingly undertoook, they now pursued through inclination; working at employments of a more laborious nature themselves, whilst their little ones were busied in nursing the diligent worm, from whose toil, they acquired advantage and pleasure.

The many little huts, that had been inhabited, but a short time before, by ragged parents, and naked children, whose squalid looks, and staring bones, bespoke poverty and wretchedness, were now the happy dwellings of well-clothed tenants, viewing with pleasure the growing years of their ruddy off-

spring. Before, they were too apt to look upon them as a burden on their shoulders; but now, justly considered every increase of their family, as an increase of blessings.

These poor, but now happy people, hearing that it was the intention of the Countess, and of Matilda, soon to leave Sicily, crowded every day to the cottage, to pour out their prayers for blessings on the latter, whom they looked upon as their guardian angel, sent to rescue them from poverty and misery, to place them in a state of comfort, and of ease.

Amongst the numerous poor visitors that came to bid a respectful farewell to their young benefactress, was a woman, lame, and almost helpless, about the

middle age of life, who could scarcely support herself with the aid of a pair of crutches.

" WHY did you come so far, Do-
" rothea?" said Matilda. " It was my
" intention to have called to see you,
" before we left Saint Reale. It is
" too great a distance for you to walk
" in so much pain."

" AH, Signora!" said she, " if it was
" ten times as far, I should think it my
" duty to wait upon you. You, who
" saved me from the most horrible of
" deaths, that of starving through the
" want of bread to eat, have a right to
" expect me to attend you, with my
" humble prayers for your blessing;
" prayers that are, many times a day,
" offered up to the throne of grace, for

" the constant care, and protection of the " Almighty over so much goodness."

MATILDA, to whom alone her praise was irksome, had some difficulty in preventing Dorothea from continuing in this strain. She had, however, said enough to attract the attention of the Countess, who learned from her, that Matilda had found her in a state little short of perishing through want of food; and that, by her attention, and by administering with her own hand, proper and nourishing aliment, she had succeeded in rescuing her from apparently approaching death; and that she had, besides, given her a purse of money, sufficient to support her for some time longer.

THE Countess asked her, how long

she had been in that lame and helpless state.

DOROTHEA replied, that she had lost the use of her limbs about a year before, by an earthquake, which happened previous to the last eruption of Mount Etna, which drove her and her family from the vineyard they rented in Val di Demona, who were all destroyed except herself.

THE Countess requesting to know the particulars, Dorothea said, however painful the recollection, she would give her the information she required.

" THE mountain," said she, " had in-
" dicated signs of an approaching erup-
" tion. It emitted columns of unusual-
" ly black smoke, which filled the air

" with a sulphureous stench, that ren-
" dered it difficult to exist under. The
" black smoke was succeeded by a pil-
" lar of flame, that sent its heat for
" miles around, scorching up vegetation
" to the root. This was followed by
" large fragments of stone, and other
" substances, being forced from the
" volcano's fathomless pit, and hurled
" high in the air, falling with destruc-
" tive violence on the country round.

" This was the signal for our remo-
" val; my husband, from experience
" past, being convinced the lava's fiery
" stream would soon burst forth, and
" descend upon the hapless land below,
" with vehemence irresistible. We,
" therefore, packed up all the moveable
" property we had, and prepared to

" leave the vineyard, to go to the east-
" ward.

" Our whole family consisted of my
" poor dear husband and myself, with
" five children, the eldest about six
" years old, and the youngest, which I
" carried in my arms, not more than
" three months.

" We had travelled but a short dis-
" tance from our late residence, when
" the ground moved under us, with a tre-
" mulous undulation, which continued
" a second or two, and then subsided.
" We made the best of our way for-
" ward, and had but just entered the
" town of Catania, when the earth
" again began to move under our feet;
" and instantly, a loud rumbling awful

" sound succeeding, it opened and
" swallowed in its yawning chasm my
" husband dear, and my tender little
" ones, myself being by the violence of
" the shock thrown down, with my
" helpless infant in my arms, and
" quickly overwhelmed by the ruins of
" some adjacent buildings. In this
" state we lay for many hours, till at
" last we were dug out by the remain-
" ing surviving inhabitants of the town,
" myself almost dead, and every limb
" broken or disjointed, and my dear
" sweet innocent crushed nearly to
" atoms in my arms. Thus was I, in
" one short second, bereft of the best
" of husbands, the kindest of men; of
" sweet infant children, upon whom
" my anxious eyes had oft with extatic
" pleasure gazed; whose early hours I

" had watched with an eager parent's
" love, and whose ripening years I
" looked forward to, with an expecting
" parent's hope. But, alas! they are
" for ever gone; never more must these
" eyes, which used with rapture to
" view their innocent smiles, again be-
" hold them; never more must these
" arms, which used to clasp them with
" eager transport to my throbbing
" breast, again embrace them; they
" are gone, with their dearest father
" gone, the partner of all my former
" pleasure, and all my former care; and
" I am left, a poor, helpless, forlorn,
" and wretched being, to survive their
" loss, but to mourn it ever."

The miserable Dorothea here shed a flood of tears, in which the Countess

and Matilda joined. The manly cheek of Dumain too, glistened with a crystal drop, at the recital of the grievous loss of the maimed sufferer.

MATILDA, after drying her tears, looked earnestly in the face of the Countess, as if in anxious expectation of hearing her speak.

THE Countess said, " Dorothea, I " pity your sufferings, and wish I could " restore to you the use of your limbs; " but that is not in my power. What " is in my power I will do. You shall " live in this cottage, to which I now " mean to pay an annual visit; you " shall be maintained at my charge, " and you shall have a person to attend " upon you, and do the many little ne-

" cessary offices for you, which you are
" incapable of doing yourself. There-
" fore, from this time, consider not
" how you are to find the means of
" subsistence, but how you can make
" your life comfortable."

MATILDA's eyes shewed that her anxiety was relieved; whilst Dorothea, in dumb eloquence, thanked her noble benefactress; and, being unable to speak, grasped the hands of Matilda, which she wet with tears of gratitude, that flowed in abundance down her pallid cheek, which seemed to say, " I owe
" all to your angelic goodness, who
" first relieved me, and now made me
" known to this my new friend!"

THE Countess ordered a commodious

apartment to be given up to Dorothea, and she became, from that time, an inmate of Saint Reale cottage.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nought but silence reigns.

BLAIR.

THE expected vessel being now arrived, the Countess had fixed upon the next day to leave Saint Reale, for Palermo, that they might be ready to embark, as soon as the preparations on

board were completed for their reception.

Dumain determined to take the only opportunity that remained for him, again to visit Lebrun, and to inform him of the time of their departure for France. As soon as the sable wings of night had spread their gloomy influence o'er the Sicilian isle, he repaired to the old abbey. He descended, with cautious paces, down the winding stairs, that he might not, by the sound of his footsteps, alarm the suspicious recluse.

After wandering, for some time, through many of the narrow vaults, at last he found the door of Lebrun's subterraneous apartment. He gently

knocked, but was not answered. He then ventured to call aloud; the echo of his voice, which rang through the vaulted space, was all the answer he received. He applied his eye to the crack in the door, through which he had first seen the solitary inhabitant of the room, but all was darkness within, and all was silence.

Having had the precaution to bring with him a small lamp, the light of which he could at pleasure obscure, he determined to examine the arched caverns, and endeavour to find the retreat of Lebrun, as he had no doubt but he had other rooms, to which he could at times retire.

He wandered o'er the desolate ruins,

mounting the stairs to the roofless rooms above, and exploring the many vaulted caves below, but without seeing, or hearing the object of his search.

He then thought, that it was possible he had walked out, under the security of the night's darkness, and that he would return before the orient sun should illuminate the face of day, and, therefore, resolved upon waiting where he was, till the morning.

At length, the grey dawn of morn peeped through the clefts, that the ruthless hand of time had made in the ancient vaults, and Dumain once more repaired to the door of Lebrun's room. Again he knocked; again all was si-

lence. He called as before; as before, he was answered only by the repercussion on his ear of his own voice,

He continued in the ruins, till he thought the Countess and Matilda would be ready to leave Saint Reale, for Palermo, when he departed, without the return of the wretched tenant of the gloomy pile.

He could not account for the absence of Lebrun, particularly too, just at the time that he had put matters in a train, by which he hoped to accomplish his deliverance, from the miserable and unhappy state he had so long been in.

Dumain was disappointed in not seeing him before he left Sicily, as they

had not thought of fixing upon any method of corresponding, should such a measure be necessary, in the course of the proceedings with the Marquis de Chalons; or, how he should communicate the result of his application to that nobleman.

If, indeed, the result should be successful, there would be no occasion any longer for secresy; but, on the contrary, should it prove otherwise, there would be more than ever, a necessity to keep the place of the unhappy fugitive's concealment unknown to the world; and therefore, it would have been desirable to have concluded upon some safe method of conveying intelligence of the event of his mission.

These ideas, he had no doubt, had occurred to Lebrun himself, who seemed so tremblingly alive to the danger he stood in; on which account, he could not avoid thinking, that his absence was not voluntary. He had, he thought, perhaps, been discovered in his subterraneous retreat, by the ever watchful eye of justice, and dragged before a tribunal where he would be confronted by Saint Fleur; who, to screen his own villainy, would swear such falsehoods against him, as would convict him of crimes he never committed; and bring him to an ignominious death, by which an end would be put to the fears he entertained, for the discovery of his own guilt.

Though these ideas were strongly impressed upon his mind, yet, he thought

it was possible, that some other cause might have drawn him from the abbey. He determined, upon the possibility of that being the case, that he would take the only method in his power, of acquainting him with his departure for France, and of giving him his address, that he might, by letter, inform him in what safe way they could establish a correspondence. He therefore turned back, and writing upon a slip of paper to that effect, subscribing it with his name, and adding the place of his father's abode in the vale Le Pui, he put it under the door of his apartment; after which, he departed, and arrived at the cottage of Saint Reale, just before the Countess and Matilda, were ready to set off for Palermo.

THEY left the cottage, and the distance being but a few leagues, soon arrived at the port, where they found the ship in all respects fitted up for their reception. The Countess, Matilda, and Dumain, with the servants of the former, embarked on board of her, preparatory to their sailing for Marseilles.

END OF VOL. II.

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